

ANCIENT GREEK RELIGION

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EDITOR:

REV. PROFESSOR E. O. JAMES,

M.A., D.LITT., PH.D., D.D., F.S.A.

*Professor of the Philosophy of Religion
in the University of London*

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ST. ANDREWS UNIVERSITY; SOMETIME
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P R E F A C E

THIS book is written on the assumption that its readers wish to know something of an important side of the intellectual and spiritual life of the most remarkable people in European history, but have no specialist knowledge. Therefore it assumes not even acquaintance with the Greek alphabet, although that is so like our own that anyone could learn it in half an hour. Those who, having read what is written in the following chapters, wish to learn more, can do so by consulting the books listed at the end. If some are led to learn the Greek language, the fountain-head of all our Western literature and science, the author will be all the better pleased.

Many Greek names occur, of necessity, in a book of this kind, and they have been transliterated exactly, not into their Latinized forms, for the book is not written in Latin, but in English. A few exceptions have been made, however. Some names have an English form, as Athens, and this has been used. One or two are so familiar in the Latinized form as to have become English, as Thucydides. Here again, consistency has gone by the board. It may be noted that in the transliterations, *u* represents what Greek wrote and writes with a diphthong, as French does. To write it *ou* might suggest the sound which those letters have in the English word *house*, but never had in any Greek word at any period. A Greek *u*, which in the classical language was generally (not in all dialects) pronounced like the French one, is written *y*. In words transliterated from modern Greek, *dh* is the sound of English *th* in *then*, *gh* is the modern Greek gamma, pronounced a little farther back in the mouth than the English or German "hard" *g* (as in *go*, *gehen*), but like our consonantal *y* if it comes before *i* or *e*. An accent over a syllable of a modern word denotes stress; in antiquity, it meant a rise in the pitch of the voice. In the modern words, again, *ē* and *ai* are pronounced alike (like English *e* in *let*), but *ai* is English *i*. *Ē*, *i*, *oi*, *y*, are all like English *ee*.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A STUDENT acquainted only with the faiths professed by civilized nations of to-day must begin by ridding his mind of several ideas of what constitutes religion, if he is to understand the beliefs and practices of classical Greece. A Christian or a Jew who takes his religion seriously is committed to belief in a number of advanced and subtle propositions concerning the nature of God and His relations to humanity. Also, he regards a number of actions of moral importance as dictated by his religion; thus, he must live either single or the faithful husband of one wife, because that is commanded; he must be strictly honest in money matters, for the same reason. If he neglects these duties, he is behaving like a bad Christian, or Jew, and if he disbelieves some of the doctrines he has been taught, he is to that extent heretical. In brief, his is a credal religion which embodies an ethical code. But the religion of ancient Greece had no creed and, although certain actions were irreligious and therefore generally condemned as displeasing to the supernatural powers, there was nothing like a code or system of morality which must be accepted by everyone who worshipped Athena or Zeus. Furthermore, a man's private beliefs were no concern of any ecclesiastical authority, provided they did not result in his trying to upset the established forms of worship or introduce new and unauthorized ones, and that they stopped short of denying that any such beings as the gods of the popular faith existed at all. It was, for example, perfectly allowable to go on worshipping Hera while accepting and teaching the philosophical doctrine that she was a personification of the air, or to consult the oracle of Apollo yet hold strongly that he was no other than the sun. The very words which signify, to us, a religious opinion, as "dogma," "faith," "heresy," "theology," have, in classical Greek, completely different associations. A dogma is the opinion of a philosopher or a philosophic school. Faith (*pístis*) is either trustworthiness and loyalty or acceptance of the truth of what someone says, or of his reliability in practical

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so much of prosperity in this life, as of future and eternal happiness. They have indeed their connexions with everyday routine, witness the various ceremonies such as prayer for rain or fine weather, for a blessing on some public or private undertaking, and the like; but even here, in the formulæ used at the great crises of life (birth, marriage, sickness, death) the emphasis is placed not so much on material as on immaterial things. In classical Greece it was not so. For instance: a baby was put through a ceremonial corresponding in some measure to baptism. But there was no idea of ridding it of purely spiritual ills, corresponding to original sin, or giving it new spiritual strength or purity. A little analysis of the rites in use makes it clear that the child was being cleansed, by material means, from the strangeness which in naïve belief clings to any newcomer, and so made a fully human being; to this day, a Greek infant not yet baptized is sometimes referred to as a *drak*, an ogre-like monster common in folktales. Also, it was ceremonially brought into contact with the family to which it would henceforth belong, and thus made a proper object for all the care which a young child needs. Till then, nothing in the opinions of the average man prevented the new-born boy or girl from being exposed, i.e., simply left on the ground in some more or less lonely spot to take his chances of being picked up by a stranger or dying of hunger and cold. This was not the murder of a young member of the family, but merely refusal of admission into it and the society of which it formed part. The frequency of such an incident in Greek drama is enough to assure us that it was by no means unheard of, even at the height of Hellenic civilization; to take two examples out of scores, the *Ion* of Euripides and the *Arbitration* of Menander turn on the exposure, rescue and ultimate recognition of a child. Ceremonies reminiscent of our harvest festivals were very common in Greece, but here again, it is quite easy to see that their object was primarily to set going beneficent processes of a magical nature with the intention of continuing the fertility of the land. To bury the dead was an act of piety incumbent upon all, alike for friend and foe, kinsman and stranger, only the vilest criminals being refused formal sepulture; but the reason was that the dead belong to another

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One who is lord of the nether world (his one cult in Greece is probably due to confusion with Pluton, giver of the wealth, *ploutos*, of the fertile earth), but conspicuous and harmless or beneficent beings, such as the sky itself and the various heavenly bodies. Uranos (Heaven) is purely a mythological figure, whom no one worshipped; the Sun had no cult in Greece proper, the moon and stars none at all. And the reason is quite plain. These high and mighty ones stay in their own region, never descending to earth to meddle with the affairs of human beings. Therefore, as they show no concern for men, men need show none for them. It is very different with Zeus, the weather-god, the "cloud-gatherer," who can be seen gathering his clouds on the tops of high hills; with Kore, the Corn-Maiden, whose embodiment is the new harvest as it comes year by year; Hermes, who makes his power felt along roads and in wrestling-schools where young men congregate; the Nymphs, to whose influence is due the movement of streams and the growth of trees, and innumerable little local gods on whom the prosperity of small communities was traditionally thought to rest and to have rested for generations. All these and many more showed their powers and occasionally manifested their presence in visions to specially favoured worshippers in places where the ordinary man or woman commonly resorted for business or pleasure, in the houses where people lived and the fields or workshops where they earned their bread. They were members, however exalted, of the same communities, and so relations with them were inevitable and it remained only to know what sort of relations they preferred, with what words and actions they should be approached, what manner of gifts pleased them best, and what displeased them and so should be avoided in dealing with them.

For man had something to give in return for divine favours. It may be that few Greeks consciously thought what Aristophanes in one of his best comedies, *The Birds*, assumes, that the gods were dependent on their worshippers for sustenance, living somehow on the animal and other foods which were burned on their altars or otherwise offered to them, but certainly it was felt that they welcomed human gifts and human honours. According to some modern Greek peasants, the earth

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fairly early in the second millennium B.C. is likewise an established fact; it is probable that they created the culture called Mycenæan, certain that they brought with them the classical tongue and the rudiments at least of classical institutions, political and other. There is no reason to doubt that they likewise brought gods of their own, different from those worshipped by the earlier inhabitants, whom Greeks of the historical period knew as Pelasgians. We can actually point to holy places where a typically Greek divinity is worshipped along with one who either has no name or none that can be explained from Greek. There is no reasonable doubt that the newcomers included the greatest of the celestial gods, Zeus himself, nor that the "Pelasgian" deities were some of them chthonian. But to imagine that the Achæians worshipped only gods of the sky, the earlier natives only gods of the earth, is flying in the face of some of the clearest evidence. No chthonian is more important than Demeter, whose name is plain Greek; Athena is an important Olympian, and her name is not Greek at all, but of a form which is known to belong to the ancient and forgotten tongue of the earlier population.

On the whole, the religion we are discussing had its origins among a people who still lived simply, depending for their sustenance chiefly on what they could grow in their fields and gardens. Trade on a comparatively large scale and anything like organized industry came later. Hence, when the city-state became the normal Greek community, a certain amount of change in their religious rites was inevitable; with their increased wealth and greatly enhanced technical skill, they could give their gods more splendid festivals, and elaborate temples instead of rustic shrines to live in. At the same time, an element of unreality was imported into some of the holiest and most ancient rites, for what was essentially the worship of country folk had to adapt itself as best it could to the needs of town-dwellers. The progressive sense of this unreality and the attempts to find new reasons for old customs (for religion is conservative and does not take kindly to altering its established expressions) will occupy us later. One change certainly took place, for it became markedly the function of the gods, "saviours" as many of them were characteristically called, to

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by certain foreigners, while he and his compatriots maintained their adoration of Yahweh¹ and exalted him as being more powerful than the strange deities), or finally, they identify the new powers with their own supernatural beings, perhaps adopting the foreign name as a title of the native god, or contenting themselves with saying that such a people worship one of the deities they know, but call him by a different name. So various authors assure us that the Egyptians worship Hermes and Demeter, meaning Thot and Hat-hor. We can find examples in Greece of all these processes. There is good evidence that Dionysos came from abroad, probably from Phrygia, in historical times, and he seems to have brought his name with him. Kybele, Anaitis, and various Anatolian mother-goddesses are known to classical writers, but for the most part, Greeks left them to their own worshippers. When the Dorians came to Sparta, about 1,000 B.C., they brought a new goddess, Ortheia² or Orthia, who in some ways resembled the old native deity Artemis. Before long, public opinion had decided that Ortheia was Artemis under a new name, or title, and Artemis Orthia, or Orthosia, for the unfamiliar word was modified, is a not uncommon figure.

But polytheism also, like every kind of religion, develops as the people practising it develop, from a simpler and ruder to a loftier and, generally, more complicated cult. The ancestors of the classical Greeks, like every other people, were once savages and their descendants retained some few traces, fossilized and harmless for the most part, of that stage of development in their worship as in their other customs. Barbarism, the next stage above savagery, left more and clearer traces on the classical civilization. Furthermore, since the basis of ancient culture was not industrial but agricultural, no region of the ancient world having anything comparable to our immense and complex factories, however much city life developed, a very large proportion of the population consisted of peasants, who, living in small communities with little opportunity for

¹ It is perhaps worth mentioning that there is no such name as Jehovah, which is a mixture of the consonants of Yahweh (Jahveh) with the vowels of *adonai*, "my lord," the phrase substituted for the unmentionable divine name in reading aloud.

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- manifest itself in quite unlikely forms, dwelling, for example, in a stick or stone which is fancied to have peculiar properties, in magic regalia, or in forms of words, or ritual gestures. The best-known word describing it is perhaps the Polynesian and Melanesian term *mana*. Originally meaning no more than "strength," or, for it is both substantive and adjective, "strong," it tends to specialize. It works, says Bishop Codrington, who first brought *mana* to the attention of European investigators, "to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature . . . When one has got it he can use it and direct it, but its force may break forth at some new point; the presence of it is ascertained by proof . . . This power, though itself impersonal, is always connected with some person who directs it; all spirits have it, ghosts generally, some men." "All Melanesian religion," he adds, "consists, in fact, in getting this Mana for one's self, or getting it used for one's benefit."¹

The other phenomenon is animism, which is simply that attitude of mind that is unwilling to conceive of anything as really inanimate. It is as the result of many centuries' scientific thought that we now realize that a river, for example, is nothing but a quantity of water, an inorganic compound totally incapable of having any sort of life, set in motion by the mechanical action of gravity. How near the surface the older conception of it as a living thing lies is clear from the ease with which we speak of it as angry, gentle, furious, sluggish or the like, and that not simply in fanciful or poetical works of literature, but in speech which rises very little above the level of the most ordinary, everyday talk. To man at an earlier stage of his development, before any such great effort of exact and abstract thought had yet been made, even by the ablest of the race, it seemed perfectly obvious that a river was alive, for it behaved in many ways like a man or a beast. Like them it moved, and like them it uttered sounds; it might work harm or good, and at times it did strange and unaccountable things, such as disappearing underground to rise again farther on, or vanishing in summer to reappear in winter. Furthermore, rivers are not all alike, since some flow swiftly, others slowly, some have

¹ R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, Oxford, 1891, p. 118 foll.

- manifest itself in quite unlikely forms, dwelling, for example, in a stick or stone which is fancied to have peculiar properties, in magic regalia, or in forms of words, or ritual gestures. The best-known word describing it is perhaps the Polynesian and Melanesian term *mana*. Originally meaning no more than "strength," or, for it is both substantive and adjective, "strong," it tends to specialize. It works, says Bishop Codrington, who first brought *mana* to the attention of European investigators, "to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside the common processes of nature . . . When one has got it he can use it and direct it, but its force may break forth at some new point; the presence of it is ascertained by proof . . . This power, though itself impersonal, is always connected with some person who directs it; all spirits have it, ghosts generally, some men." "All Melanesian religion," he adds, "consists, in fact, in getting this Mana for one's self, or getting it used for one's benefit."¹

The other phenomenon is animism, which is simply that attitude of mind that is unwilling to conceive of anything as really inanimate. It is as the result of many centuries' scientific thought that we now realize that a river, for example, is nothing but a quantity of water, an inorganic compound totally incapable of having any sort of life, set in motion by the mechanical action of gravity. How near the surface the older conception of it as a living thing lies is clear from the ease with which we speak of it as angry, gentle, furious, sluggish or the like, and that not simply in fanciful or poetical works of literature, but in speech which rises very little above the level of the most ordinary, everyday talk. To man at an earlier stage of his development, before any such great effort of exact and abstract thought had yet been made, even by the ablest of the race, it seemed perfectly obvious that a river was alive, for it behaved in many ways like a man or a beast. Like them it moved, and like them it uttered sounds; it might work harm or good, and at times it did strange and unaccountable things, such as disappearing underground to rise again farther on, or vanishing in summer to reappear in winter. Furthermore, rivers are not all alike, since some flow swiftly, others slowly, some have

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which a good harvest gives them. Greek artists found them promising subjects and visualized them as young women, slender and graceful, and statues of them, no doubt of that kind, were at Orchomenos when Pausanias visited it. But these were modern dedications of his own day, and not the chief objects of worship. The really venerable things were again certain unshaped stones, which may well have been meteorites, since the story went that they had fallen from heaven in the days of the mythical king Eteokles. Here we perhaps have one of the reasons for the cult of rude stones; a meteorite is rare and impressive enough to give rise to a belief in its supernatural powers, especially among people who have no idea whatever of its actual nature. Others again of these ancient holinesses may have been old standing stones, similar to those which are found in many parts of Europe to this day, relics of a neolithic population. Be that as it may, such cults were quite common in antiquity, and the ultimate explanation would seem to be that for some reason which appeared to them sufficient the inhabitants concluded that the stones were either the abodes of invisible beings or contained *mana*.

It need not follow that they proceeded to identify the shapeless objects of their worship with any of the greater or lesser gods familiar to them and, through the numerous works on ancient mythology, to us also. True, such identifications were not unknown; thus, at Pharai in Achaia, alongside a statue of Hermes, whose temple was in their market-place, there stood some thirty stones, not quite unwrought, for they had been squared, and the inhabitants associated the name of a god with each. But not only were there altars frankly dedicated to unknown gods, for instance at Athens and Elis, but several deities locally venerated seem to have had no names. Thus, not far from Megalopolis in Arkadia there was the shrine of a power known simply as the Good God (Agathòs Theós), while in the region of Bulis, near Phokis, although the inhabitants knew of and worshipped some of the generally recognized gods and goddesses, their chief veneration was for a being whom they called by no name but only by a title, Mégistos, the Very Great. This and like facts may underlie the theory of Herodotos that the Pelasgians knew no divine names at all till they were

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exactly what, under the circumstances, we should expect, and indeed find in several like cases. It is probable on the whole that his name means the Feeder or Pasturer. We can easily imagine that in Arkadia, where he was originally worshipped, many little groups of herdsmen devoutly adored each its divine Pasturer, perhaps represented by some stick or stone set up in a holy place, and quite possibly each group was ready to proclaim the superiority of its own Pan to everyone else's. This might well be so, whether the god had originally been conceived as a single being or a plurality, for local cults tend to break up in this way. Nothing can be more certain than that the Virgin Mary is one person in every kind of Christian theology, and no cult is more widespread in modern Greece than hers; but I have read of a Chian peasant who proclaimed in emphatic and not over-delicate language that the Panaghia (the All-Holy One, her popular name) of his village church could outdo all other Panaghiës whomsoever.

This same divine Pasturer was never a very exalted figure, nor always treated with profound respect, or what we should regard as such, even by those who worshipped him in all sincerity. His business (a god has his duties; even Zeus is commended for "doing well" when he sends seasonable rain) was to keep his herdsmen-worshippers well supplied with meat. The obvious way to do this was to make their flocks and herds increase abundantly, and theirs were mostly small cattle, sheep and goats, especially, it would seem, the latter. Now the obvious increaser of a herd of goats is the he-goat, and a divine he-goat is essentially what Pan was supposed to be. When represented by an image at all, he regularly has goat's legs and a shaggy beard, and his few legends make him out to be as lustful as his prototype. His power was not unfailing, and, like that of not a few gods of sundry religions, might need stimulation and renewal at times. We know how this was done; if the meat supplies, whether got from the flock or by hunting, were scanty, the boys used to beat Pan (i.e., his statue or whatever object represented him) with squills, a plant supposed to have the virtue of driving away evils. Thus they at once roused the god to further efforts and rid him, to the best of their ability, of whatever unlucky influence had hindered his

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us, nor in an open place at night, "for the nights belong to the Blessed Ones," but in all possible seclusion. Someone, whether Hesiod himself or another, adds at the end of the poem (hence a part of its usual title, *Works and Days*) a curious list of lucky and unlucky days of the lunar month. For example, a boy born on the twentieth will be intelligent; the tenth, too, is a good birthday for a boy, the fourteenth for a girl, and also the fourteenth is an excellent day to start training a dog or breaking in a mule or ox, whereas the fourth days from the beginning and end are alike hopeless for work of any sort, as they bring nothing but trouble. It is likewise a fact, though this is known to but few, that the last day of a lunar period is the very best time to launch a ship. The nineteenth has its good points, especially in the morning and the late afternoon, but the fifth is to be avoided, for that is the birthday of Horkos, the grim power which punishes those who break their oaths (*horkoi*).

From about the time of Hesiod onwards, the number of powers to be revered was augmented by the widespread worship of "the gentry" (*hérois*), generally known to us as hero-cult. The original meaning of the word *héros* is simply a man of good family, a gentleman, especially, it would seem, a member of one of the old Achaian families whose exploits form the theme of Epic poetry for the most part. In Homer there is no indication that such men, though honoured "even as gods" in life, if they were worthy of their high position in society, were invoked after their death to help the living, but later this is exceedingly common. Perhaps the intervening Dorian invasion, which completely changed the political complexion of a great part of Greece and gave the poorer people a new and not too popular set of lords, had surrounded the older aristocracy with a halo of regretful glory, obscuring their weak points and lighting up their virtues. Certainly the views concerning the fate of man after death had changed. For Homer and his audience, this life is all that really matters; death is not annihilation, but for all alike, a few special favourites or enemies of the gods alone excepted, it means passing into a mere shadow of existence, in which the soul can do no more than engage in a kind of pale reflexion of its earthly activities. It would seem that the common people believed that

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seen, by avoiding unlucky actions and days as much as possible. Such avoidance was not wholly a matter of magic and superstition, for quite early, not least in Hesiod himself, the idea was current that at least some of these beings, and above all Zeus, cared for the morality of mankind. If men will do justly both by fellow-countrymen and strangers, he teaches, the gods will reward them with prosperity; their fields will yield bounteous harvest, the oaks will bear plenty of acorns and wild bees make their hives in them, the flocks and herds will increase, the women will bear healthy children. But for those who practise *hybris*, wanton disregard for the rights of others, there are none of these blessings, but rather plague, famine, sterility, and disaster in war, or shipwreck at sea. We must not, however, suppose all Greek country folk to have had so advanced an idea of divine morality. Again and again we hear that it was commonly supposed that the gods could be coaxed or bribed into overlooking offences, that they are very long-suffering and so forth, while throughout antiquity, and not only among the humbler minds, the problem is discussed why, if there are gods and they care anything for justice, the good are by no means always prosperous nor the wicked always unfortunate. Indeed, to believe as Hesiod did was never part of ancient religion, which, as already pointed out, had neither a creed nor a moral code, but the fruit of private reflexion on the data available.

The average person, then, might mend his ways lest Zeus or some other god be angry with him, but he certainly would engage in the prescribed rites to win the favour of the powers, great or small, whom he and his fellows supposed likeliest to bless or ban him and his community. From a number of sources we can put together a sort of composite picture, perhaps not exactly true for any one place or time, but accurate enough in its main outlines, of how ordinary Greeks behaved towards their deities. A little has been said in the first chapter about the household observances; something can now be added, especially regarding the great crises of life, birth, marriage, and death.

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and we have some idea of how this was done. The Athenians called it "the running around," *amphidrómia*, and it took place, says one ancient authority, on the fifth day, others say the seventh or tenth, after the birth. All who had attended the mother ceremonially cleansed their hands and so purified themselves; for parturition is a magically dangerous business besides its physical perils, and those who have anything to do with it are *tabu* in the opinion of practically every people on earth below the highest levels of modern civilization. So dangerous was it, in Greek opinion, that it might not take place on consecrated ground, any more than that equally ominous process, death. But the baby needed something more elaborate. Therefore the officiants in this homely rite stripped themselves naked and one of them, picking up the child, ran with it around the family hearth. The object of this performance is plain enough. The child, held against the naked body of one of the family, is brought into the closest possible contact with its kinsfolk. At the same time it is moved quickly through the air, in hopes of blowing off its strangeness, and exposed, though not so nearly as to hurt it, to the heat of the fire, which purifies, being the holy fire of Hestia, and also presumably burns away any ill-luck which the newcomer may carry. Now the child is one of the household, and further to cement the new relationship, presents were made it by friends and relatives; curiously enough, they normally consisted of octopods and cuttlefish, which were and are commonly eaten in Greece but are hardly suitable infant diet. The tenth day after birth, whether or not it was the date of this ceremony of reception, was the name-day of the baby, though here again some preferred the seventh, and friends and neighbours were invited to the Greek equivalent of a christening feast. A sacrifice regularly took place, and the meat of the victim furnished the staple of the meal. Meat, then as now, was something of a luxury to the average Greek, whose more usual diet was bread, salads and vegetables, olive oil, cheese, honey, and, when he could get it, fish. The gods shared the tastes of Achaian nobles, who disliked fish and were hearty eaters of meat. More presents to the child were the rule on occasions when people saw it for the first time, whether soon after the

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was to sing the epithalamium which accompanied the retirement of the newly-married pair to their bedroom. Fragments of other ceremonials have come down to us, mostly through the good offices of ancient scholars who interpreted the names of them to ages which used other rites or at least called them something else. One of the bride's protections consisted of a sieve which she carried; the reason is easy to suggest, for it is a thing used up and down Europe to baffle evil spirits. They cannot, it appears, resist trying to count the holes in it, and while they are doing that, they are out of mischief. In some modern forms of the belief, they are unable to pronounce "three," because that is the number of the Trinity, and so go on saying, "one, two, one, two," till they are hopelessly confused. We may guess that whatever evil things plagued a Greek bride were stopped in like manner at one of the ancient sacred numbers, possibly seven, Apollo's number. We also know a little of the ritual which the bridegroom went through when he formally made his newly-married wife's acquaintance; it involved the removal of her veil and the presentation to her by him of the "gifts of uncovering" (*anakalyptéria*), in itself a rite of union, for to give part of one's property is to give a piece of one's self and therefore a kind of communion with the recipient. On another occasion, when sometime after the wedding the bridegroom formally called on the bride's family and spent the night there without her, he and she gave one another gifts, hers being a cloak, perhaps of her own weaving, for him to wear. But the whole affair, from betrothal till after the consummation of the union, was girt about with ceremonial, no doubt intended to secure divine protection and favour. One rite was of a kind by no means peculiar to weddings, but found in many contexts. Before her marriage, the girl cut off some of her hair and dedicated it to an appropriate power. At Athens, Hera, Artemis and the Moirai, the "Apportioners" who attended (and, in popular belief, still attend) a birth and decide what the future destiny of the child is to be, were the recipients. At Troizen, or Trozen, in the Peloponnesos, the hair was left at the supposed tomb of Hippolytos, the unfortunate son of Theseus whose untimely death furnished Euripides with the subject-matter of two plays. It is obvious enough that a lock of hair is a thing of little

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habit of living in holes of the earth or the crannies of walls, as belonging to the lower world, and so very fit vehicles for spirits of the dead, though it would be a gross mistake to suppose that every serpent treated with respect by an ancient Greek was supposed to be a ghost. It would be still more unjustifiable to fancy that they venerated all snakes; on the contrary, most of them were simply regarded as noxious creatures, to be killed at every opportunity. But some species were known or supposed not to be venomous, and if one of them appeared in a house, its owner would take more or less notice, according to his degree of religiosity. The fussily pietistic man (*deisidaimon*, he who dreads the supernatural; the word usually has a bad sense, though it can correspond to our "God-fearing") in Theophrastos, if he finds a snake of the sort called "holy" in his house, at once sets about making a hero-shrine for it. It is a fair deduction that the average householder would not jump to any such conclusion, but would watch to see if the creature came again or behaved in any remarkable way.

Since the gods were about everyone's path, indoors or out, it is no wonder that signs of their presence and intentions were common. A belief in omens was and continued to be universal among the general run of people throughout antiquity; indeed such a belief is by no means dead in our own day. Theophrastos' pietist again differs from his fellows not by believing in such things but by seeing them everywhere. Even a mouse nibbling at a leather sack is an omen to him, and he is very dissatisfied when an official interpreter of portents is unimpressed and tells him he had better get the sack mended again; while if a weasel runs across the road he waits for someone else to go along it before he dare tread on such a dangerous spot, or at least he performs a little counter-magic to nullify so terrible a sign. The average ancient had more common sense than to be frightened by every small creature he saw, but some kinds of animal behaviour attracted general attention, notably the cries and flight of the larger birds, especially the birds of prey which, not flying in flocks, are easier to observe. Hence the name for this kind of bird, *oionós*, or even "bird" in general, came to mean "omen," and instances of public and private observation of these signs are abundant. A bird-watcher in

habit of living in holes of the earth or the crannies of walls, as belonging to the lower world, and so very fit vehicles for spirits of the dead, though it would be a gross mistake to suppose that every serpent treated with respect by an ancient Greek was supposed to be a ghost. It would be still more unjustifiable to fancy that they venerated all snakes; on the contrary, most of them were simply regarded as noxious creatures, to be killed at every opportunity. But some species were known or supposed not to be venomous, and if one of them appeared in a house, its owner would take more or less notice, according to his degree of religiosity. The fussily pietistic man (*deisidaimon*, he who dreads the supernatural; the word usually has a bad sense, though it can correspond to our "God-fearing") in Theophrastos, if he finds a snake of the sort called "holy" in his house, at once sets about making a hero-shrine for it. It is a fair deduction that the average householder would not jump to any such conclusion, but would watch to see if the creature came again or behaved in any remarkable way.

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their holy places, statues and the like were everywhere, and must be treated with respect. Again Theophrastos' pietist shows us by his exaggerations what a normal person would do. If he finds a holy stone at a cross-roads (a likely place for them; cross-roads are uncanny in most countries, and so the more divine help can be got there, the better), he will oil it, drop on his knees and adore it. Probably almost everyone would show respect in one way or another; a common gesture was to kiss one's hand to the holy thing. Even the most casual would avoid injuring or defiling it in any way; when the Hermai in Athens, upright stones improved by carving a human head at the top and a phallus half-way up, and usually dedicated to the god after whom they were named, were found one morning mutilated, the whole city was in an uproar and a long series of trials for impiety followed. To this day we are not sure whether the business arose out of the foolish and drunken freak of a few young men, or was a political plot to "spread alarm and despondency" at a critical moment in the history of Athens. Moralizing writers are full of tales of the terrible things which befell rash individuals who, under stress of wartime conditions or for some other reason, robbed or otherwise insulted shrines, and other stories were current of images which had shown by miraculous movements, closing their eyes or the like, their indignation at impious deeds committed in their presence.

At stated seasons, usually having a relation to the various activities of the farm, such as sowing, spring and autumn ploughings and harvest, a festival of some kind would engage the activities either of the whole community or of some considerable part of it, for example, all the women, or all married women. Something more will be said of these holy-days when we discuss the religion of Greek cities; for the present it is enough to explain the normal central rites which belonged to all of them. To approach a god in due form it was proper always to bring a gift, and, apart from dedications of statues and other ornaments for the shrine, the commonest gifts were food, either cereal, animal or both, drink, and incense. The gods were not unreasonable, and did not exact costly offerings from those who could not afford them; again to consult current ancient tales, we are told of offerings of a handful of meal or

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such remnants as the bones were buried in the holy ground of the precinct where, generally, the rite took place, though there was nothing that we know of to prevent an altar being erected and a sacrifice offered on any ground which was not in some way polluted or otherwise supposed to be offensive to the deity. In later times at all events, if there was more flesh than could be eaten on the spot, it might be taken to the nearest market and sold like any other meat. If the victim was an ox or bull, its skull was often fastened up outside the temple, or, if the offering had been made by a private individual on his own property, outside his house.

This procedure was what the Greeks called a *thysia*, or burnt-offering. If the god approached was not an Olympian but a chthonian, the ritual was different in several ways. The victim, normally white for an Olympian, must now be black or dark-coloured. Its head was pointed down, not up, when it was killed, and not infrequently its body was not burned but disposed of in some other way. In any case, the god normally was given the whole of it, and the reason for this is fairly obvious; though the gods of the earth and the nether world were not evil, they were formidable, and the close communion with them implied in the shared meal was not wanted. A sacrifice to them was not called a *thysia*, but generally an *enagisma*, which means simply consecration. Finally, the proper times for the two kinds of offering differed; for the sky-gods, morning, at any rate daylight, and the full moon or the waxing moon were appropriate; for chthonians, night, or at least afternoon, and the wane of the moon. Special restrictions and prescriptions were not rare; there were a few altars on which no blood might be shed, the offerings being such things as cakes, and numerous chthonian cults which did not allow libations of wine, but only of water, milk and honey. This in all probability marked them as old, for wine, though the Mediterranean peoples of antiquity were perfectly well acquainted with its use and making, is yet a foreign drink, its name being a loan-word from some Anatolian speech. The native term for an intoxicating drink is cognate to English "mead" and, like it, probably meant originally a beverage made by fermenting honey, although in classical times the

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Returning from the funeral, the mourners ate the funeral feast (*perideipnon*) and purified themselves, washing off the taint of death. Their regular offerings at the tomb followed on the third and ninth days after the death, and in some places at least there was an annual rite, called at Athens *genésia*, the clan-feast. We know little about it, but the name makes it at least likely that the kin gathered, possibly near their burial-place, and, making the regular offerings to the dead, which, besides those already mentioned, might include animal victims, joined in a common meal. We shall see later that an All-Souls' day was part of a Greek ecclesiastical calendar. Such festivals were not so much sacrifices, still less worship, as renewals of the table-fellowship which had existed while the dead members of the kin were still alive.

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what the ordinary householder did every day of his life, when he laid a garland on the statue or altar of a household deity, or made some little sacrifice to him, pouring perhaps a few drops of wine or burning a small amount of incense. Generally speaking, apart from certain special functions reserved for particular clans, anyone could be a priest or priestess, and the office need not be held for life, but might be for a year or some other predetermined period. Few, while they held a priesthood, were cut off from ordinary secular activities, though they often had to observe sundry restrictions as to costume, avoidance of particular acts, and so forth. Also, a magistrate, however secular his office might be, usually had some priestly functions as well. In the earliest times of which we know anything, a king's office combined both kinds of activity, and that elected Athenian magistrate who still bore the name of king during the twelve months that he was in power had, besides much ordinary public business, a leading part to play in one of the holiest ceremonies of the year, and was assisted by his wife, for that occasion at least dignified with the title of queen. Nor were any special qualifications beyond professional knowledge required in order to be a diviner (*mántis*). Clearly, individual priests or prophets might exert considerable influence, if they were regarded as persons unusually wise or holy, but they were no more enveloped by a mysterious aura than are our doctors and lawyers, and they could have little or no class consciousness which might have moved them to take combined action towards influencing their fellows.

Finally, the average Greek was optimistic in his attitude towards his gods. One of their commonest epithets is "givers of good," and good was what was expected of them. It is plain fact that not only ghostly visitations, be they real or imaginary, but also such material ills as epidemics, drought and floods are abnormal; when they do occur, a reason is sought for them, while their absence is more likely to be taken as a matter of course. Therefore, the plain man much oftener than not saw the rites, for instance, which he performed to secure a good harvest followed by a sufficient yield from his land, and naturally was the readier to believe that they were efficacious. He tended the family dead, and no ghosts disturbed him; again

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CHAPTER III

THE ORIGINS OF GODS

ALTHOUGH, as we have seen, it is not always possible to trace the origin of any Greek cult to its beginnings, it is worth while to set down what is known with certainty or a high degree of probability about the history of some of the deities who made up the classical pantheon. From the earliest times of which we have any knowledge at all to the disappearance of the non-Christian worship in Greece is something like two millennia and a half, and in so long a period it was inevitable that many changes should take place, including the introduction of foreign deities and their rites.

To begin with, we have a considerable amount of evidence concerning the gods whom the Greeks found when first they entered the country. This is contained in the rich archæological discoveries made both in Crete, where the civilization we call Minoan flourished for about fifteen hundred years, and in Greece proper, which had a high culture, known as Mycænæan from the name of the place where the first important excavations were made. Who the bearers of this culture were is a disputed point, but on the whole it seems most likely that they were the invaders, the ancestors of Homer's nobles, who had adopted much of the art and refinement of the Cretans; it is, however, possible and maintained by some scholars that they were Cretan colonists, attracted presumably by the prospects of trade with the people of the mainland. Whichever theory is true, there are clear signs that they worshipped some deities at least similar to those of Minoan Crete, and that these cults left their traces behind, in the shape of several divine names inexplicable from anything in the Greek vocabulary, and in ceremonies and legends resembling each other but easily distinguishable from normal Greek myths and rites.

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miracle. Furthermore, there exists a hymn in Greek, of a relatively late date, in which Zeus is called upon as the "greatest of the young men," and asked to join in a rite meant to bring prosperity to the land. We find him, then, as a baby just born, a young man and a corpse. Parallels from various parts of the world make it evident who he is; not the Greek weather-god at all (why he was called Zeus is a puzzle, perhaps because he was the most important god the Greeks heard of in Crete and they therefore identified him with the chief of their own deities), but what may be styled a year-god. That is, he is an unconscious personification of the year, not as a period of time but as a cycle of seasons, in which all things that the earth bears come into being, mature and die. As such, he is naturally the child of the Earth-Mother, and as such he grows, decays and dies, only to come to life again the next year. That such a figure survived into the days of Minoan civilization and its derivatives indicates that it is a tough and long-lived conception. Among the Greeks, who had nothing of the kind in their own beliefs, it faded and took disguised forms; the divine child becomes a mortal infant who is exposed, but survives because he is tended by a beast or by some supernatural being such as a nymph. He then grows and has a distinguished, but human career. Or he may never reach maturity, but die either in infancy or while still young. The most famous instance of this has already been mentioned in passing. Hyakinthos of Amyklai was, beyond any reasonable doubt, a god of the type just described. His name proves that he is no Greek, for the suffix *-nth-* is characteristic of old names, inexplicable from any Greek word, which are found here and there in the classical vocabulary; sometimes names of places, such as Corinth (Korinthos), which pass, generally with some change of pronunciation, from one stratum of population to another, sometimes names of flowers and plants or other unalterable features of the surroundings in which the newcomers found themselves; we may compare place-names like Temiskeming, which dot the map of Canada and belong to the Amerindian speech, not to English or French, and words such as ouananiche, caribou, signifying respectively a fish and a quadruped not found in Europe but common enough in North America.

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ever was, and her name, to judge by what she is called in the god's very old cult at Dodona, was a feminine form of his own, Dione.

Artemis was a little harder to fit into the Greek scheme of things. There is small doubt that she was originally a mother-goddess of that type which, not knowing what the Cretans called her, we name the Lady of wild things. Her province was the uncultivated land and the creatures that live in it; she also had women under her charge in two very important ways, for she could help them at childbirth and when a woman died suddenly, it was Artemis' arrow which killed her. A being so associated with fertility would herself naturally be fertile. But, unlike some goddesses otherwise resembling her, she had no consort. Now to Greek ideas, gods and goddesses should behave like great nobles; their ways might differ from those of men, but they had rules of their own, and, being the deities of a monogamous people, they clearly would set store by the chastity of their wives and daughters, though their males might allow themselves considerable liberty, as an Achaian noble did. A Homeric "king" (the word is rather too grand for such men as Homer describes; "baron" would be less misleading) had but one wife, but he might have children by other women also, and neither they nor their mother were outcasts; a *nóthos*, the son of one of these unions, was a member of his father's household and had some part in the succession to his father's estate, though his share was smaller than that of a legitimate son. But the women of the baron's own kin are regularly shown as chaste; it was a most grievous offence when Agamemnon's wife took a lover in his absence, and Helen's leaving her husband to go to Troy with Paris was excusable only because she was under the influence of Aphrodite and could not help herself. In like manner, Zeus might have his concubines, but his daughter, if she was not married, must be a virgin. That Artemis was his daughter is a doctrine which must have arisen very early, and presumably it resulted from an attempt to fit so important a goddess into the scheme of which he was the head. Therefore Artemis could be no one's mother. That the original goddess was a figure of many local, pre-Greek legends of motherhood and birth is strongly indicated by the tales of

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against neighbouring communities which were so prominent a feature of their whole history. Now when we find a deity armed and associated with the palaces of warlike Mycenæan barons—for everything we know about that culture tells us that its history was a stormy one—the conclusion is reasonable that Athena began as the guardian goddess of these princes and their houses, and when her worshippers passed, she remained, attached to the natural strong points where the fortified dwellings of the one-time lords had stood, and still an object of veneration to the newly arrived inhabitants of the Greek-speaking towns which grew up around the old sites. That an industrious and intelligent population should make her something more than a strong defence against its enemies, and that therefore she should be protectress of arts and handicrafts as well as of fighting men and their weapons, is nothing surprising. Indeed, we may say that so far as she is a war-goddess, she is a goddess of civilized warfare, with its intelligent discipline, whereas Ares, who in the opinion of some was originally a god of death, remained associated with slaughter, war-madness and violent ends of all sorts, including death by plague.

Another goddess of the mother-type, Aphrodite, can be traced to the island of Cyprus, which is a very old centre of trade and industry, the metal copper being named *aes Cyprium* or *Cyprum* from it in Latin; it is well known that at the end of the Stone Age the trade in copper, of which the island has deposits, became increasingly important. Here also archaic idols, exaggerating the sexual characteristics after the manner of such primitive things, have been found. The Greeks planted a settlement in Cyprus at an early date, as is shown by the fact that a variety of the very old-fashioned speech of Arkadia is found there, and naturally became acquainted with the chief goddess of the place. Coming to Greece proper, Aphrodite found herself faced by serious rivals, notably Hera, and consequently her activity came to be largely confined, not to the sober business of marriage and childbirth, but rather to all that concerns the passion of love, which no doubt is why she is commonly said to be the mother of Eros, a deity with whom, originally, she had nothing whatever to do. The moral tone of

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and this at once describes his main activities and marks a common tendency to identify him with his particular portion of the universe. It is natural enough that he has a long string of titles denoting the sending of thunder, lightning, rain, wind and so forth, and, since a farmer's interest in the weather is practical, another series setting forth his connexion with agriculture. But this is very far from exhausting his complex nature. Being so high up, yet near enough to the earth to influence it, he must know everything and be very wise, as is the way of sky-gods the world over, since they see and hear all that goes on. Furthermore, things continually fall from the sky, not only rain, but also thunderbolts and meteorites. As these evidence the power, the *mana*, of the sky-god, they take his name on occasion; we hear now and then of a cult of Zeus Kappótas, Zeus Who-came-down; for instance, near Gythion, the port of Sparta. The object venerated was a stone, probably once known or supposed to be a meteorite, though in later times people had forgotten exactly why it was so holy. If in the form of a stone or a shower of rain, clearly Zeus might also descend in bodily shape, or invisibly, and tales of his doing so for all manner of purposes are innumerable. Very many stories and not a few titles assure us that he was interested in the conduct of the human beings whom he beheld from his lofty abode. Thus, he is Xenios, God of the Stranger, and to strangers hospitality is due. "The gods," says Homer, "in the likeness of strangers from foreign parts, taking all manner of shapes, wander about the towns, beholding the frowardness and the lawful dealings of men", and legends not seldom tell how Zeus himself did this very thing, rewarding or punishing on occasion those who regarded their duties towards the supposed petitioner for food and shelter or those who rejected his claims. Other journeys to the earth were for amorous purposes, as this or that woman caught his fancy. Several such myths are but thin disguises of the ancient tale, how Father Sky wedded Mother Earth, but apart from this, his conduct is much like that of the Achaian nobles whose sexual relations we have discussed. We must speak later of the comments which such stories excited in more sophisticated days. To their first tellers, there was nothing in them derogatory either to the majesty of the god or

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more or less completely displaced. One of them, Amphitrite, became the rather insignificant wife of the great god. Another, Nereus, although he himself sank into the background, maintained a place in the beliefs of the folk, since he is the father of the classical mermaids, the Nereids (i.e., daughters of Nereus), and they are still believed in about the Greek countryside, though to-day their name has been altered to Neraïdhes and they are by no means confined to the sea. Like his realm, Poseidon remained of a rough and forbidding character, subject to outbursts of furious rage, and his human children, for like Zeus he had his favourites among mortal women, were regularly men of violence. As was natural among a seafaring people whose country has a coastline enormously long in proportion to the size of the whole, he was much worshipped, but he commanded respect rather than affection.

Of the third brother, Hades, not much need be said. We have seen that the living did not worship him, and the only important rite with which he has any connexion, the Eleusinian Mysteries, will be discussed later.

The most typically Greek god, Apollo, probably was not a Greek to begin with. It is a disputed point where the Achaians found him, for many things about his cult and legends point to the Near East, while others indicate a northern origin. But, wherever he came from, he was thoroughly naturalized before the date of our earliest documents. His genealogy is, like that of all popular gods from abroad, completely Greek; he is son of Zeus by the Titaness Leto, a representative of the older race of gods who were before the Olympians, and Artemis is his twin sister. Why these two, whose origins are utterly different, should ever have been given this intimate connexion, no one can say; possibly the circumstances that both are archers and both connected with creatures of the wild had something to do with it. In his earliest form, Apollo seems to have been a god of herdsmen, hence his title *Nomios* (He of the pastures). Greek gods, like those of most nations, are apt to resemble their worshippers; indeed, it is not rare for a Greek deity to have titles which really signify the condition of those who pray to him. Thus Zeus is on occasion *Hiketēs*, that is to say, "the suppliant," because those who come to beg for help from

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and graceful young man; in disposition, he was kindly, though his wrath was no light thing if he was offended. The favourite son of Zeus, he gave true oracles because he knew the will and purposes of his father.

For reasons which escape us, there grew up in the fifth century B.C. a philosophical theory that he was a personification of the sun. It became extremely popular, hence, for instance, the many passages in Latin and modern poetry in which "Phœbus" (Phoibos, the Bright or Pure One, is a title of Apollo) is said to rise or set, meaning that the sun does so. Perhaps as a corollary of this, many fancied that Artemis was the moon.

Of Ares something has already been said. The ancients generally regarded him as closely connected with Thrace, whose inhabitants, much more backward than those of Greece, were divided into a number of wild and turbulent tribes, perpetually at odds with each other. It may well be that he was a Thracian god originally, although he is provided, like the rest, with an Olympian pedigree, being the son of Zeus and Hera. He never developed into anything more than a supernatural cut-throat, having no connexion with any moral ideas, such as many of his alleged kinsmen, notably Zeus, Athena and Apollo, came to have. An unpopular god, for the Greeks, despite their constant feuds with one another, never liked war, he receives more uncomplimentary epithets in literature than any other deity. In equating him with the Italian Mars, theologians did him more than justice, for Mars is a good deal more than a war-god.

Hephaistos was undoubtedly a foreigner, as is shown not least by the position of his places of worship, for they spread out from Asia Minor. He probably began by being the god of volcanic fires, and came from what the Greeks called the "burned" region of Asia, which shows, and showed even more clearly then, traces of former volcanic activities. He is associated with Lemnos, which also showed traces of being volcanic, or at least was thought by the ancients to do so. But on arrival in the more progressive parts of Greece, those which were comparatively industrialized, such as Attica, he became a god of craftsmen who use fire for their trades. Moving farther west, as

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originals of Dionysos' parents in the Greek tradition, Zeus and Semele, though the latter becomes a mortal woman, daughter of Kadmos, the legendary founder of Thebes. A deity of the powers of nature, his ritual in the countries of his origin was marked by features strange to the sober Greek cult. His votaries, especially women, worshipped him in wild places, with frantic dancing, loud cries, and the rending in pieces and devouring raw of certain animals, especially bulls and goats, which are closely associated with the god and often his incarnations. The object of all this seems to have been to induce a state of ecstasy in which the human personality vanished and the worshipper became for the time being one with his or her god; hence the very common use of his titles to designate those who had accomplished this mystical union with him, he being very often called Bakchos, they Bakchoi or Bakchai, according to their sex. While Homer has no more than heard of Dionysos, his cult made its way into Greece and was established there by about the seventh century B.C., although some of its more savage features were reduced to mere decorous semblances of the original actions. Even so, some of the ritual was ecstatic enough, including, at Delphoi, where the new god was warmly welcomed and given a quarter of the year for himself, revels at night on the heights of Mt. Parnassos by torchlight. A minor development was that, since other powers of the fertility of nature were already well known, Dionysos tended somewhat to specialize, not so much in ritual as in art and literature, into a god of wine. Around him gathered, besides his human following, various lesser powers of the countryside and the wilds. These included the Satyrs and Seilenoi, minor embodiments of fertility, of whom the former were conceived as grotesque and lustful little men with the tails of horses, and Nymphs, female beings who haunted or animated trees, hills, streams and other natural features. The word *nymphe* means "bride" or "young, marriageable woman," and they are often represented as amorous, and regularly, like the material objects with which they are associated, as long-lived but not immortal. Furthermore, all manner of little local gods were swept up in the newcomer's triumphant progress, becoming men whom he had favoured, or the like, in popular beliefs and stories. The

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latter from a herald's need of sufficient rhetoric to state his errand clearly and persuasively. In all these capacities, Hermes was brought into close contact with man, and generally was a kind and friendly god, a bringer of good fortune to all manner of people, and therefore of one of the most desired forms of it, fertility. At all events, the phallus was one of his commonest emblems, and marked his "herms," as already mentioned (p. 37). He had, as usual, an Olympian pedigree, being son of Zeus and Maia, daughter of the Titan Atlas, who in the shape of a mountain upholds the sky. She was identified with one of the Pleiades.

Any of these and the other, less-known deities might be worshipped separately or in small groups, or in conjunction with one or more of the heroes. Some of these groups were so familiar that it was not necessary to mention the names of the gods composing them; thus, if a Spartan swore "by the Two Gods," everyone knew he meant Kastor and Polydeukes, often called the Dioskuroi, i.e., Sons of Zeus. They are, either both or one of them, his sons, their mother is Leda, wife of Tyn-dareos, King of Sparta in legendary times, and in different accounts one, both or neither is immortal; evidently both were so in historical Sparta. Pairs of divine twins are not unexampled in Greece, though they tend to become heroes instead of gods. Other groupings were for certain formal purposes, such as solemn oaths; at Athens the usual deities were, according to an ordinance ascribed to the ancient law-giver Drakon, Zeus, Poseidon and either Athena or Demeter. Some preferred longer lists; if the oath was an important one, taken on behalf of a state by its plenipotentiaries when making a treaty, a dozen or more divinities might be invoked. Physicians, when they took the famous Oath of Hippokrates, swore by the gods of their art, Apollo, Asklepios and his family. In the casual asseverations—they are hardly real oaths—of everyday life, men tended to swear by gods, women by goddesses. But the largest permanent group of divinities was the Twelve Gods, who quite often were worshipped together. They are Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Ares, Hephaistos and Hermes; Hera, Athena, Artemis, Aphrodite, Demeter and Hestia. If a group of male and female powers of such different origins could share the same liturgy, the fusion

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THE GUARDIANS OF THE CITY

So far, we have been considering chiefly the individual worshipper or the small rustic community. But the most characteristic developments of Greek religion, as of their civilization generally, took place in cities and not up and down the countryside. A city without its public cults would have been an unheard-of thing to any Greek of the classical period, as unheard-of as one without churches would be to the present inhabitants of Greece. Since Greek cities, though the biggest of them were small compared to the huge size of our largest municipalities, still were much greater, wealthier, and more advanced in culture than the villages of a purely agricultural population, they could and did worship with far more splendour and formality, and appealed to their gods for more complicated gifts, though ultimately they were the same as before, deliverance from want, from conquest by an enemy, and from plague. Also, the more conspicuous nature of the city's achievements called for more imposing services of commemoration and thanksgiving; and finally, the worship of a god was the commonest occasion for a great assembly to which not only citizens but foreigners were invited, and such assemblies were excellent advertisements for the power and glory of the State. One result of all this is very welcome to the historian. Such conspicuous pieties tend to be recorded in some detail, and consequently we know far more of the religious life of a city than of the country, and most of that city which was the most articulate, Athens. Athenian literature, like that of all Greeks, is full of mentions of the gods and their festivals, and the lasting admiration which it excited and the assiduous study of it in later times produced abundance of explanatory matter, commentaries, lexica and so forth, of which a considerable portion has come down to us. The result is that we can construct, for Athens if for no other Greek city, a fairly complete ecclesiastical calendar, and give comparatively detailed accounts of the majority of the festivals whose names and dates we know.

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ancient humanity never considered for a moment, and when paganism finally collapsed, its place was at once taken by a new ritual, not by cessation of worship. But when the farmer saw the official clergy of the city performing the traditional rites which should accompany harvest, for instance, and were as much a part of it as the actual reaping of the corn, at a time when the grain was still unripe or was already gathered, it must have struck him as very strange and rather meaningless, though it might not seem so to the townsman who got his living, not by ploughing and sowing, but in a workshop which fashioned vases, it might be, or tools and weapons. Aristophanes, who always understood the plain man, puts into the mouth of his chorus of Clouds in the play of that name a complaint against the muddled calendar of Athens:

"The moon," they say, "sends her compliments to the Athenians and their allies, and adds that she is much annoyed at the abominable treatment she gets in return for all her benefits. . . . You will not reckon the days aright, but get them all topsy-turvy, so that the gods often threaten her when they must go home without the feast they expected on the proper date. When you ought to be sacrificing, you put witnesses to the question and decide law-suits, and when we gods are holding a fast-day, you pour drink-offerings and laugh."

However, the official calendar was the received framework of the official ritual, and all Athenian months have the names of festivals, great or small, which fell in them. The year began, approximately at midsummer, with Hekatombaion, the Month of the Great Sacrifice (*hekatombaia*; a "hecatomb" is supposedly an offering of a hundred head of cattle), of which we know nothing save that it was in honour of Apollo and so probably on his day, the seventh. A more interesting day is the twelfth, the Kronia, or feast of Kronos, an old god (his name means nothing in Greek), whom popular tradition made the father of Zeus. It is pretty clearly a harvest-festival; indeed, the god is shown in art carrying a curved implement which may well have been originally a reaping-hook, though the myth gave a very different explanation of it. On that day masters served their slaves and ate at the same table with them, thus furnishing part of the material for yet another legend, that in the days when

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connexion the title Metageitnios, we know nothing about it, not even on what day it fell. A little better known is another feast of this month, the Eleusinia. This had nothing to do with the Mysteries of Eleusis, though it was in honour of Demeter and Kore, nor did it occur every year, but biennially, with every second celebration especially brilliant and so called the Great Eleusinia. These four-yearly celebrations were one of the many Greek festivals of which athletics formed a part; the Great Panathenaia were another. This is not the place to go into the problems connected with Greek athletic sports; on the whole, the events did not differ very much from our own, save that team-games corresponding to our football, cricket and so forth, hardly existed and were never important. The most striking outward difference was that, except in early times, the contestants were entirely naked—the Greeks soon rid themselves of the pruderies and false modesties in regard to the human body which are a relic of savage superstitions concerning the sexual functions. More important is the association of the sports with religious ceremonials. All the greatest athletic “meets,” the so-called Great or Holy Games, were in close connexion with festivals held in honour of gods. The greatest of them all, the Olympic Games, took place at the quadrennial feast of Zeus at Olympia in Elis; the Pythian Games were at Delphoi, Apollo being naturally the god honoured there, the Isthmian at the Isthmus of Corinth, in the worship of Poseidon, and the Nemean, again in honour of Zeus, at his ancient shrine at Nemea. The victor was crowned with a wreath of a plant associated with the local deities, at Delphoi, for instance, with laurel, which is Apollo’s tree, and was held to enjoy their favour. From this it has been somewhat hastily concluded that the actual events were originally rites, but on further examination it becomes clear that this is not so. The athletes are perhaps in some sense the guests of the god, certainly they are under his protection and in all probability he was held to enjoy the exhibition of their strength and skill, but in themselves their contests are quite normal performances, the natural amusements of a crowd of Greeks, who were always very fond of sports, met together on a holiday occasion. This was true of the Athenian festivals also; but the interest of the god to whom the festival

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throughout the world. During her wanderings, which went on day and night, the goddess carrying a torch to show her the way in the dark, the world suffered from famine, for the earth, deprived of the kindly activities of the Corn-mother, produced no food. At last she came to Eleusis, and there, in the outward semblance of an old woman, was kindly treated by the king and his household, and made nurse to the infant son of his queen, Metaneira. In return for this hospitality, she planned to make the child immortal, and every night she burned away his mortality in the hearth-fire. Anointed with ambrosia, the food of gods, he took no hurt from this magical process, but one night Metaneira saw her baby lying in the fire, and screamed with terror. Demeter therefore broke off her relations with the royal family, revealed herself in her true form, and proclaimed that the child would now be mortal like other men. However, she still showed favour to the people of Eleusis, bade them build her a temple and taught her rites to them. Meanwhile an agreement had been reached between her and the other gods; if Kore had eaten no food in the world of the dead, she was to return to her mother, but if she had, she must still be the wife of Hades-Pluton. Hades had contrived that she should eat a few seeds of a pomegranate, which was enough to bind her to him and his realm, but a compromise was struck between him and Demeter; Kore should stay with him for part of the year, but spend the rest above ground with her mother. As we have the legend, which is certainly very old, there is a certain amount of confusion between two classes of gods, both belonging to the earth, Hades (the Unseen One), lord of the dead, and Pluton, the giver of the riches of the soil (cf. p. 13), and consequently between Persephone, queen-consort of Hades, and Kore, the Corn-Maiden. This is important, for it explains the interpretation which pious minds from an early date put upon the Eleusinian rites.

The whole myth is apparently the statement in words of what was shown in action, by means of a dramatic dance or simple and primitive play, at Eleusis. Words and actions alike set forth what actually happens year by year, for the Corn-maiden does indeed go underground in a Greek summer. The harvest is much earlier than with us (we have seen that

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purified themselves and the pigs which each had to present as a sacrifice to Demeter, by a bath in the sea. The next day, an offering was made to Demeter and Kore, and on the 19th the procession started for Eleusis. It was a merry journey, traditionally made in old clothes and accompanied with singing, dancing and joking. We need not suppose that everything which was done then had a ritual significance; it was a holiday crowd, despite the solemnity of the rites in which it was to take part. These began on the 20th, that is, by our reckoning, after sunset on the 19th, for initiations always took place at night, by torch-light. They lasted till the 22nd, perhaps simply because there were generally more candidates for initiation than could be dealt with at once in the not very large building available.

The next month, Pyanopsion, was named from the Pyanopsia, again a festival of Apollo and certainly known to have taken place on the seventh day of the month. Its central feature was the presentation to Apollo, at a solemn meal, of a sort of porridge made of various kinds of pulse boiled together, hence its name, literally "the boiling of beans." Doubtless the intention was, by presenting some of this kind of food for the god to eat, to get his blessing on the whole of the corresponding crops. Another old and popular rite took place on the same day and probably had had originally nothing whatever to do with Apollo, perhaps not with any god. It was the carrying of the *eiresione*, a kind of small maypole, consisting of a branch of olive or laurel hung with fruit, bread, cakes, and little bottles of honey, wine and oil. The bearers of it were children, who went about collecting contributions from private houses, a very widespread custom attaching to several seasonal festivals up and down Europe. We still have an old song (ascribed, as usual, to Homer) which they sang on this occasion in Samos; it is a series of praises and good wishes for the householder and his family, followed by a request for a gift. The Athenian children sang,

"Eiresione brings figs and fat loaves, honey in a jar and oil to scrape off her, and a cup of strong wine to drink herself to sleep on."

The bough was hung up over the house door and kept there till next year; but (by a custom which the Athenians declared

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who had purified themselves for three days in advance went down into these *mégara*, making a noise to frighten away the snakes, and brought up any remains of the pigs' bones and rotted flesh that might still be left. These they solemnly laid on altars, and afterwards they were mixed with the seed-corn. The object of all this is not hard to make out. Skirophorion would come, at least nominally, a little before harvest, when the earth might well be supposed exhausted by the effort of producing the crops. Therefore young and fresh specimens of the most fertile of domestic animals, a creature sacred to Demeter, were given her, together with representations of things productive of increase and of the mysterious creatures belonging to the underground world. These, it was hoped, would supply fresh *mana*, which would be needed for the next year. But when they had remained so long in contact with the underworld, the remnants of such an offering must themselves be very full of the magic of fertility; therefore, the now vigorous earth could spare them to give a higher rate of increase to the seed-corn. Of the second day of the Thesmophoria we know little, except the obvious fact that the women fasted, a common rite enough in connexion with both religious and magical ceremonies; it was a preparation for what was to come on the third day, and it was reinforced by the women living, not in any building, but in little booths made of leafy branches, that is to say, in close contact with the earth and what it bears. The "fair increase" of the third day, on which sundry sacrifices were offered, may refer to the blessing of abundant harvests, or of children, or of both; the celebrants were married women of respectable families, which did not prevent them keeping up the old ritual custom of making rather broad fun of each other during the ceremony.

For the rest of this month and the whole of the next, Maimakterion, there is little of interest. The latter was named from the festival called Maimakteria, held in honour of Zeus Maimaktes, an old title which apparently means "stormy." It may have been meant to keep off damage from autumn storms. The winter month Poseideon, named from Poseidon's festival (Poseidea) on its eighth day, contained yet another festival of Demeter, the Haloa, on the 26th. The name seems

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already been honoured the month before, not, however, by any ceremony in Athens itself, but at a number of places in the country, which celebrated what we call the Rural Dionysia. Now the city performed his rites, of which, unfortunately, we know but little, save for the fact, more important to literature than to religion, that plays were performed then, as they were at the Great Dionysia, of which we shall have to speak later. The glimpses we catch of the proceedings make us curious to learn more. The presiding official was that archon, or yearly magistrate, who bore the title of King (Basileus; hence moderns, but no ancient, often call him the Archon Basileus, or King-Archon). This in itself indicates that it was of no small importance. Those very usual features of a classical Greek holy day, a procession and a sacrifice, were organized by him on this occasion. But, as Apollo at Delphoi had recognized the younger god, his half-brother, and given him a share in his sanctuary, so, it would seem, the great powers of fertility whose holy place was at Eleusis extended a welcome to this newer deity of fertility whose title, Bakchos, sounded a little like the name of their own Iakchos. The welcome took the form of declaring that Bakchos and Iakchos were one and the same. Consequently, the Daduchos (see p. 72), carrying his sacred torch, cried at some part of the ceremony, "Invoke the god!" and the faithful replied, "Son of Semele, Iakchos, bestower of riches!" Greeks, who were apt to assume that all peoples really worshipped the same gods, although the names might differ, often made identifications on slighter grounds than that. The god returned the courtesy, it would appear, for at the Lenaia an offering was made to Demeter, Kore and Pluton. Beyond this, however, nearly everything about the Lenaia is uncertain; this is not the place to describe, much less try to settle, controversies which have arisen between able specialists as to the interpretation of some data from ancient art which, if we were really sure what they represented, might tell us rather more.

In the fluctuating Athenian calendar, Gamelion might include part of February, and the Greek spring is much earlier than ours. Hence it is not surprising that the next month has a name derived from the flowers which made their appearance then. It is Anthesterion, and the festival after which it is named

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In the fluctuating Athenian calendar, Gamelion might include part of February, and the Greek spring is much earlier than ours. Hence it is not surprising that the next month has a name derived from the flowers which made their appearance then. It is Anthesterion, and the festival after which it is named

a certain respect, as plainly containing *mana*. So it was brought into contact with powers known to be friendly, Dionysos or the Agathos Daimon according to local usage, that its potency might have a good effect only. The second day was the Choes, plural of *chus*, a large vessel holding something like two English quarts; the word refers to a peculiar feast which was held on that day, by representatives of the State and certain persons who were invited, in a public building, and no doubt by private individuals in their own houses also. The peculiarity was that each guest was given his own *chus*, instead of all being served from a common mixing-bowl. Thus everyone had the same amount of wine, and there was a contest in drinking, the prize going to him who finished his wine first. Yet it was not so frivolous an affair as it might seem, for everything was done in silence. Each guest had not only his own wine, but his own table, unlike the ordinary social meal where the Greeks, like us, had one large table for all the guests. It was so unusual that the Athenians sought a reason for it and decided it was in commemoration of the visit to Athens of Orestes when he came to be judged and purified after the killing of his mother, and those who received him had to find a compromise between refusing him hospitality altogether and talking, eating and drinking with one still polluted by blood-guilt. Precisely what it all meant is still none too certain, but the silence indicates that the spiritual atmosphere was electrical and every slightest danger of ill-omened words, or perhaps noise of any kind, must be avoided. As likely a suggestion as any seems to be that ghosts were about, and it was well to get the whole ceremonial over quickly (hence the drinking-race) and quietly. We may remember that the Passover, also a spring festival, is to be eaten "in haste," with a show of being anxious to start at once on a journey. However this may be, Dionysos made himself felt in the ceremonies of the day by no less a rite than his own marriage. On that occasion, the wife of the Basileus (cf. p. 79) was brought to the Bukoleion, her husband's official residence, attended by a group of women carefully chosen and sworn to purity and to observance of certain Dionysiac rites. She herself must be living in a first marriage. The "queen" and her attendants made certain sacrifices, the nature of which was kept

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to learn from our authorities that the festival was marked by "a certain gloom" and that the sacrifice was a holocaust, that is, entirely burned, none of it being eaten by those present. The usual offering, from one of the general public, was not a beast but a cake shaped like one; such beasts as were sacrificed were, at least usually, swine. However, the day was a holiday for Athenians, on which guests were invited and gifts given to children. The god's title, which means something like "easily entreated," may not have been simply due to politeness or euphemism; he was one from whom pious people hoped for benefits. Since, then, the proper rites were being conducted, there was no reason why the rest of the population should not enjoy themselves, in secure confidence that Zeus Meilichios would not hurt them and might bless them.

Elaphebolion, the next month, took its name from the festival of Artemis, the Elaphebolia ("shooting of stags"). The divine Huntress was given "stags," but not real ones, for the name was used of a kind of sweet cake, presumably in the shape of a deer. Far more interesting was the great feast of Dionysos, which lasted from the 9th, or, counting its preliminaries, the 8th to the 13th. It was known as the Great or the Urban Dionysia, and popularly as "new tragedians," for it was then that plays were principally staged. It is fairly certain that drama in Greece, as in several other parts of the world, began as a religious or magical rite, though we cannot trace the intervening steps. Whatever ritual mummeries or guisings may have preceded it, Tragedy first appeared as a literary form in the sixth century B.C., and was encouraged by that great and enlightened tyrant, Peisistratos. Its first known author was Thespis of Ikaria, a district of Attica connected in other ways with Dionysos. Tradition has it that the subject of the first plays was always the god's own adventures, and it was not till later that other myths than his were drawn upon. Comedy also seems to have begun in some kind of rustic merry-making which had a ritual value, a sort of feast of misrule, in which customary restraints were at least slackened, and the *komos*, or party of revellers, after whom the drama itself was named, for "comedy" means "revel-song," had full licence to use the most outrageous language and gestures to the most respectable and important

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moderation and artistic sense, into a decorous festival at which some of the finest products of Greek poetry, and doubtless also of their music, were displayed to a public which seems to have been, on the whole, the most critical and discriminating that ever filled a theatre. In the age of the great dramatists, the fifth century, and for some time afterwards, there were no theatrical performances except at Dionysos' festivals, and the idea of producing plays simply for the amusement of those who liked to pay for seats and for the profit of a manager and his company was quite unheard-of. However secularized in content, the drama continued to be part of a religious ceremony, popular and interesting no doubt, as many ceremonies were, but not to be detached from its context of worship.

In the next month, Munichion, there occurred little of religious interest. It was named after the Munichia, which took place on the 16th, at the same time as an annual commemoration of the victory at Salamis in 480 B.C. This had apparently been attracted to the existing feast-day, for the battle actually was fought later in the year, and a naval display was part of the proceedings. But of the Munichia itself, except that it was a festival of Artemis, we know next to nothing. A better-known rite of hers, though its date is not recorded, was the Brauronia, named after the little town of Brauron on the Attic coast. At this besides the sacrifice of a goat, her most usual victim, there took place a dance of "bears." These were little girls, about ten years old, dressed in robes dyed with saffron, whether to imitate the beast's tawny hide or merely because that was the usual dye for a girl's or woman's holiday frock we do not know. But it gives us a glimpse into something much more primitive than normal Attic cult, suitable for a festival not belonging to the capital itself. The goddess, being lady of wild places and wild things, herself appeared on occasion in bestial shape, and that of a she-bear was one of her manifestations. By a very common tendency of all manner of religions, her worshippers were attracted into their deity's outward form; the bear-goddess is attended by bear-virgins. Another remnant of Artemis' ancient and savage past was preserved at Halai, where the Tauropolia was annually celebrated in her honour. This included a vigil, the women who worshipped the goddess filling the night hours

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loading the accumulated ill-luck, or sin, on to living beings and then getting rid of them and their burden together. Two wretched and ugly men were chosen, one for the men and one for the women of Athens. For some reason which is not easy to find, they were then adorned with strings of dried figs, black for the men's representative, white for the other. Finally they were driven out of the city; possibly, though this is not directly testified, they were stoned out. How they were chosen, if they were natives or foreigners, bond or free, whether they were compensated for their uncongenial duties or forced to accomplish them, and precisely how the ill-fortune of the inhabitants of Athens was transferred to them are points on which we lack information, but the general purport of the rite is clear. Also, the word used to describe them, *phármakoi*, i.e., men acting as a *phármakon* (cf. p. 80), was the reverse of complimentary; when Aristophanes is abusing the politicians of the day, he says that in old times Athens would not even have used such people as *phármakoi*. The next day saw the now purified city performing the ceremony from which the whole festival had its name. Grain from the ripening crops was cooked in pots and formally presented to Apollo. These first-fruits were called *thargélia*, and no doubt the point of the offering was to secure, by bringing the god into contact with the cereals, his good influence for the coming harvest.

Later in the month, on the 24th and 25th, probably, though the exact days are not certain, fell two ceremonies which go back to the ancient and naïve conception of the statues of the gods as being themselves divine and living in the temples which sheltered them. Athena, like all good housewives, must have her times of housecleaning and clothes-washing, and that is what is meant by the names of the days, Kallynteria and Plynteria. Of the former, we know only what the name tells us; *kallynein* means to tidy a room or house, to sweep and dust it, therefore that was what happened on that day to Athena's official abode. As to the latter, we are better informed. We know that two girls, called "bath-women" or "laundresses," took Athena, that is to say, her ancient statue, for that was the really sacred cult-object, not the magnificent figure which Pheidias wrought for the Parthenon, down to the sea at

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which had caused anyone's death could be formally tried for murder, and this was solemnly done to the axe, which apparently was found guilty and thrown away, probably into the sea. Why such tenderness should be shown in the case of this one ox, when hundreds of others were killed every year, up and down Greece, in the service of Zeus and other deities, is a question which has been answered in a variety of ways by students both ancient and modern, without any explanation as yet finding general acceptance. Perhaps as likely a suggestion as any is that the animal, having eaten the holy food of Zeus, itself became sacred and could not be killed without danger, like a common beast. Yet sacrificed it must be, for the god in whose honour the festival was held could not miss his promised gift. Therefore it was killed, but with precautions; the weapon which had struck it down, and so had become charged with highly dangerous *mana*, was as perilous as if it had killed a man and had the pollution of death and blood-guilt upon it, and therefore was got rid of in due form. The priest who had handled the axe had not, presumably, actually touched the ox, and therefore, separating himself as he did from the *mana*-laden implement as soon as possible, and avoiding the equally dangerous neighbourhood, he was not affected.

The month and the year closed with a sacrifice to Zeus and Athena, both of whom bore the title of Saviour (Soter, Soteira).

This, in outline and with omission of a number of festivals which were merely commemorative of events in Athenian history, or were brought in by foreigners with the permission of the Athenian government, or finally are so obscure and difficult that the proper place for the discussion of them is a full technical description of the religion of Athens, was the ecclesiastical year of that Greek community which we know best, or rather of which we are, in this and other respects, least ignorant. A few general remarks may conclude this chapter.

It is not only in the titles of this or that god but in countless passages in the surviving literature which speak of their relations to mankind that we find Greek deities described as saviours. The salvation they brought was of a purely material kind, protection of communities, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, of

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and its governance by logical deduction from first principles which are or seem too certain to be questioned, there lie a multitude of stages, some more, some less intellectual, of modification, variation, elaboration of the beliefs with which the dissatisfied enquirer starts, and, perhaps still more important, a great variety of emotional reactions, which induce correspondingly varied tendencies to this or that type of religious, or irreligious, conduct.

Finally, the democratization of parts of Greece accompanied the growth of ethical feeling, first among the more philosophic minds and then, working down from them, among the multitude. The old acceptance of the gods as having laws of conduct peculiarly their own grew less and less general. If there were principles of good and evil action binding on all men alike, why not on men and gods as well? Alternatively, if some things were right for men and others for gods, was there any real moral difference between actions at all?

Thus the three assumptions, that gods exist, are beneficent and regard righteousness, which underlay normal Greek cult became less axiomatic as time went on. Not only the philosopher but the tolerably intelligent ordinary man felt something of the resulting difficulties. Some of the better-known solutions will be dealt with in the next chapter.

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man of such moderate means as would enable him to procure shield, spear and the rest of the infantry-man's armament had become of military importance, if not individually, at least as a class, and since that class often proved too much for the traditional nobility, there was always a possibility that in times of discontent some of them might also tamper with the traditional hierarchy of the gods. It is not, then, surprising that by about the sixth century or earlier we hear of religious innovations.

Of these, one of the most remarkable was expressed in a considerable amount of literature, in verse, ascribed to Orpheus, a legendary musician and prophet of Thrace, or to some one closely connected with him, such as Musaios, his kinsman or pupil. It is convenient to call this Orphism, though we have no right to claim that there ever was a single and self-consistent body of Orphic doctrine, still less that there existed anything like an Orphic church. What did exist, however, in some of this literature at least, and apparently at a fairly early date, was a strange other-worldly religion, remarkably unlike the normal Greek beliefs as shown in their ritual and customs. Yet it is the sort of religion which one could imagine springing up among individuals and classes of society which combined lively faith in gods of some sort with bewilderment at the hardships which fell to the lot of themselves and others in those troublous times, while at the same time their intellectual development was not so advanced as to make them be repelled by crudities and absurdities in their own or their teachers' portrayal of divinities. The new doctrine, once accepted, accounted satisfactorily enough for the misfortunes of the good in this life, and held out hopes of compensation in another. It was nothing less than a doctrine of original sin and regeneration, of heaven, purgatory and hell.

The myth which embodied these teachings has come down to us only in writers very much later than the time of which we are speaking, but there is evidence that its kernel at least is really old. Zeus, according to these authors, had a son, Zagreus, by his daughter Persephone, and intended to make the infant lord of the universe. But the Titans, incited by Hera, contrived to murder the child, whom they devoured. Zeus killed the Titans with his thunderbolts and from their ashes sprang men,

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extraordinary mass of tabus, in their origin showing a mentality no better than that of a savage, which seem to have been taken up by some members at least of the school and given a justification, probably by methods of interpretation not unlike those in use at a much later date, which found in them allegorical precepts of morality and religion. In this strange region of thought, a man might observe such precepts as, never to leave the impress of his body on the bed-clothes in which he had slept, not to eat certain unlucky kinds of fish, not to use a knife to stir his fire, and hundreds more of the same kind, with the satisfaction of knowing that he was, by doing so, brought into a kind of fellowship with men whose learning and wisdom were renowned throughout those districts (Southern Italy and Eastern Sicily especially) where Pythagoras' followers were active. In Pythagoreanism also, or in its popular off-shoots, he might find justification for a belief which has left its traces here and there in the Greek region, namely, reincarnation. Although, as already said, there was nothing like an organized religious body teaching Orphic doctrine, the ideas themselves were abroad and showed their influence in many quarters during the greatest ages of Greek culture, the sixth, fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Peisistratos, tyrant of Athens, who looked to popular support for his enlightened and mild despotism, would appear to have encouraged Orphic literature; certainly we hear that Onomakritos, a celebrated diviner of that age, was banished for interpolating some prophecies of his own forging into a collection of the oracles ascribed to Musaios. The culprit was caught in the act by Lasos of Hermione, a poet of great technical skill who is said to have taught the great Pindar, and the sentence pronounced by Peisistratos' son Hipparchos, who himself acquired a reputation for teaching popular morality to his subjects, or his father's, by inscribing wise saws on the monuments he erected. At Delphoi there was set up a picture of the underworld, very different from that given in the Homeric poems, where the bulk of the dead continue to lead a life which faintly shadows their earthly activities, and no one is tormented save a few direct offenders against the gods, such as Tantalos, who stole their divine food, and the giant Tityos, who tried to rape Leto. The picture, which was executed by

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that there were to be found pushful sellers of indulgences, so to call them, who knocked at the doors of the rich, produced whole libraries of books by Orpheus and Musaios, and professed themselves ready, at very reasonable fees, either to secure divine forgiveness for any sins of their patrons, including ancestral guilt, or, if preferred, to put a curse on those patrons' enemies. Needless to say, such impostors knew better than to prescribe a life of asceticism, but advised sacrifices, with their attendant feasts, which would procure for those who performed them both success in this life and freedom from all pains and penalties in the next. There was no scripture universally regarded as inspired for these men to quote, but a text of Homer was nearly as authoritative, and they did not fail to cite, out of its context, the remark of old Phoinix in the *Iliad* that the gods have mercy on sinners who approach them with prayers and offerings. This sort of thing was apparently quite common in the fourth century, the wane of the classical period, when Greece, weakened by the series of intestine wars, contained many anxious people, the more likely to turn their hopes in what was, for Greeks generally, an abnormal direction. Other hedge-priests of a like type were plentiful, not only for wealthy men, but for those of moderate means, when they needed something more exciting than the sober State cults. Theophrastos' pietist, of whom we have already made the acquaintance, was one of the customers of the *Orpheotelestai*, or performers of rites laid down by Orpheus, to whom he would resort once a month, taking his children and his wife, if she was not too busy, in which case he would bring the nurse with him.

To the average man, there were two sources for a knowledge of what the gods were like, art and the traditional myths concerning them. Neither of these constituted articles of faith, but they were generally received. Few would doubt, for instance, that Zeus, if he appeared in his true shape and human eyes could bear the sight, would have the outward form of a majestic and stalwart man in the prime of life, Athena that of a strongly-built and sternly beautiful woman in the armour of a Greek foot-soldier, while Aphrodite's beauty would be of a softer and more voluptuous type, and Hermes would show himself as a

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between gods are best left untold; Pindar dares not handle them. Years later, Euripides, who was a radical in religious matters as in many others, put into the mouth of one of his characters the bold statement, "If the gods do aught base, they are no gods." Pindar would have said rather that they are gods, therefore they do nothing base, whatever lying fables men tell of them. Nor was it only poets and philosophers who thus corrected mythology. It seems to have been believed for a while in Athens that Peisistratos was raised to power by Athena in person. But this was offensive to the moral sense of the republic which succeeded the fall of his house; how could a goddess so debase herself as to favour a tyrant, even an intelligent and mild one like Peisistratos? By the time Herodotos, about two generations after the establishment of democracy, heard the story, it was all a trick of the wily adventurer, who dressed up a tall, fine-looking woman in appropriate costume and took her with him into the city. Herodotos is a little doubtful, for it is strange to him that the sharp-witted Athenians should have been imposed upon by so transparent a fraud. But others had a lower opinion of the intelligence of the common people, and a few, who seem not to have won much assent, went so far as to class all mythology and all religion with Peisistratos' alleged ruse. When government was new, so Kritias the oligarch, who was a friend of Sokrates, taught in a tragedy he composed, it was soon discovered that while the laws could check overt wrong-doing, it still went on in secret. Therefore, some subtle man invented the gods, and told the public that they lived for ever, knew everything, and so could not be deceived, also that their dwelling was in the sky and they had the thunder and other formidable phenomena at their disposal. Thus religion is a salutary check on the vicious vulgar. Whether this doctrine was put into the mouth of a sympathetic character or of the mythical rascal Sisyphos who gave the play its title, we do not know, for no more of it is preserved; but it found a certain amount of acceptance here and there. So also, but mostly in later times, and among Romans or Christian apologists rather than normal Greeks, did the strange romance of Euhemeros, who lived about the end of the fourth century B.C. In his rather stupid work, an inscription had been discovered on a

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like could not preserve their worshippers, to whom should men look? One answer, though never very popular in Greece itself, gained currency and at least official recognition in many Greek-speaking cities, such as Alexandria, where the population was largely non-European in origin, the fruit of Alexander the Great's spread of Hellenic culture to the mainland of Asia and to Egypt. It was, that a new kind of saviour-god was manifest in the persons of the great kings who succeeded him, and whose alliance and friendship was certainly worth having. If these men could save, which the gods were supposed to do, why not draw the logical consequence and call them gods? It was not pure flattery, though it disgusted many Athenians when an Athenian poet addressed these words to that brilliant, but unstable prince, Demetrios Poliorketes, on his visit to their city:

“For other gods live far, so far, away,
Or, belike, are earless,
Or are not, or care nothing how we fare.
Thee we see before us,
Not bronze nor marble, but thy very self,
Therefore thus we pray thee:
Before all else, beloved, grant us peace,
For 'tis thine to give it.”

This was no isolated freak of a verse-writer, for the whole city had turned out to meet the exalted visitor, garlanded, burning incense and pouring libations. Nor was it confined to Athens, for temples to Demetrios' mother and his mistresses sprang up in several places, and he himself was credited with being the son of Poseidon and Aphrodite. He had, despite his ambition and erratic life, too much common sense to relish this sort of thing, unlike that extraordinary person, Menekrates the physician, who insisted on being called Zeus and gave the names of lesser gods to his attendants, patients cured, as was alleged, of epilepsy (the “holy disease” in Greek, because it was commonly thought to be a supernatural visitation). This oddity, who seems really to have been a man of considerable skill in his profession, was a native of Syracuse, corresponded with kings on the footing of one potentate addressing another (a

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purely Greek religion. Let us return to those developments which were more normal in Greece.

Apart from the treatments of mythology which have been dealt with, there were two others at least which found considerable favour among those who had some tincture of philosophy and therefore were open to new doctrines originating among the philosophical schools or their predecessors, the lectures of the fifth-century sophists. One was, to regard the myths as dealing with personified natural forces. Poetical language, familiar to everyone from the many writers in verse whose works formed the basis of education in all Greek schools, helped this assumption. For instance, it had been common since Homer's day to speak of Hephaistos when nothing more than fire was meant. Also, some at least of the minor deities really were a sort of personification, in the sense that they arose out of the animistic outlook on nature (cf. p. 21). Thus the same word, Boreas, was the name of the north wind and of the legendary being supposed to govern it. Hence it needed no great ingenuity (as Plato shows when he ironically pretends to admire the cleverness of the theory) to say that an Attic story, how Boreas had carried off the daughter of one of the kings of Athens and married her, was nothing but a poetical record of her death by an unfortunate accident. She had been blown off a hill-top by a strong blast of wind, and thus killed. Many explanations were far more elaborate than this, and not a few of them depended upon etymologies, which, in the infancy of grammatical science, were generally nothing more than bad puns. Zeus was the subject of some of the worst. His name, a very old one, is declined in more than one way, and among the resulting forms are an accusative, *Dia*, and a by-form of the nominative, *Zen* or *Zan*. These happen to sound like the Greek words for "through" and "live" respectively, hence it was often assumed, in one form or another, that he was thus named because he was the power through whom things happen, or who gives life. His consort was the subject of like speculations. Her name, Hera, easily transposed into *aēr*, for the aspirate, always lightly pronounced in Greek, tended strongly to be dropped altogether in some dialects and was not always written as a separate letter in the current alphabets. Once this was

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If myths, which at least make definite statements, and poets, who give their own form to myths, were subject to such strange treatment, it was not to be expected that ritual would be left without comment. As Aristotle well says in a famous passage, those undergoing an initiatory rite are not to learn anything, but to experience something and get into a certain frame of mind. And, as already stated (p. 73), not a few who underwent such ceremonies as those of Eleusis came out profoundly impressed. Cicero, whose philosophical works preserve many Greek ideas of his own and earlier times, seems at first glance to contradict Aristotle in speaking of Eleusis, at which, he says, "we not only learn with gladness the way of living, but with it a better hope in dying." But, as so often, Plutarch gives us the key to the puzzle. Cicero, as he recommends, had evidently brought with him to his own initiation "a doctrine from philosophy to be his guide." He had read into what he saw in the Hall of Initiation ideas which he had learned in a philosopher's lecture-room or from private study. But he was far from being the only man to do the like, and Eleusis by no means the only ritual to furnish material for edification to those who came with at least the beginnings of a religion of their own. For example, in Greek cult as in all other, purity was an essential prerequisite for those who would take part in worship, whether at a shrine or elsewhere. To begin with, this was a formal affair. The would-be worshipper washed; he put on clean clothing of the prescribed colour (for instance, an inscription tells us that women who wished to be initiated into the rites of Despoina, a goddess adored at Lykosura in the Peloponnesos, must have on no jewellery, be barefooted, and dress neither in purple, black, nor any embroidered fabric). He also observed various ritual abstinences. Some of these were from certain foods; thus, at Lindos in Rhodes, anyone who had eaten cheese must wait a day before entering the temple, and if he had eaten goat's flesh or beans, three days were required. But one of the most important requirements was sexual continence; generally speaking, the sexual act disqualified from worship for a longer or shorter period, as did also contact with the two ends of life,

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Eleusis. It united Greek, Egyptian, and apparently also Babylonian elements, and was plainly intended to be a worship in which all could join, regardless of nationality and local preferences. But that is merely an extreme example of what meets us on every hand if we examine at all closely the phenomena of later Greek religion, throughout the age known as Hellenistic, i.e., after Alexander and before the Roman conquest of Egypt. As we have seen, such things occurred earlier, as when Artemis and Ortheia (p. 19), Apollo and the Sun (p. 59) were taken to be the same goddess and god respectively, but the later ages pushed it to fantastic extremes, running together deities who had originally borne not the least resemblance to one another and complicating matters by introducing elements completely foreign to Greek cult and thought.

But to return to Plutarch, and those who thought with him; they probably were many. Despite his optimistic view concerning the gods generally, he could not but see that there were not only myths representing some of them as behaving in a way quite inconsistent with any developed ideas of deity, but rites which seemed to aim at propitiating unfriendly powers, or inducing them, not to do any good, but simply to refrain from doing harm. He, and many others, found a solution for this difficulty in the conception of *daimones*. This word, which to begin with seems to have been merely a vaguer equivalent of "gods", had tended from Hesiod onwards to signify superhuman beings of something less than divine rank, and by the time Plato was an old man, i.e., about the middle of the fourth century B.C., it was taking on a quite definite meaning. Plato, perhaps, his immediate followers and successors certainly, elaborated a new doctrine concerning these beings. Their proper abode is neither heaven, which belongs to the gods, nor earth, which is the home of men and the lower animals, but the air, which lies between heaven and earth. Corresponding to this intermediate dwelling-place is their intermediate nature. They are superior to men, inferior to gods. A god is morally perfect, but a *daimon* is not necessarily so; he may be good or bad, and in any case he is subject to passions, somewhat as men are, and therefore capable of doing unreasonable things, of departing from strict justice to serve some personal end, of being angry

Eleusis. It united Greek, Egyptian, and apparently also Babylonian elements, and was plainly intended to be a worship in which all could join, regardless of nationality and local preferences. But that is merely an extreme example of what meets us on every hand if we examine at all closely the phenomena of later Greek religion, throughout the age known as Hellenistic, i.e., after Alexander and before the Roman conquest of Egypt. As we have seen, such things occurred earlier, as when Artemis and Ortheia (p. 19), Apollo and the Sun (p. 59) were taken to be the same goddess and god respectively, but the later ages pushed it to fantastic extremes, running together deities who had originally borne not the least resemblance to one another and complicating matters by introducing elements completely foreign to Greek cult and thought.

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there was no lack of someone for the ordinary, uncritical men and women to appeal to, and about the time when confidence in the power of the traditional deities to protect whole communities was weakening, several new figures appear on the religious horizon of antiquity, or at least, if known before, take on a new aspect and greater importance. One of the most outstanding of these was the healer Asklepios. Until late in the fifth century B.C., not much is heard of him. To Homer, he is the father of two minor heroes, Machaon and Podaleirios, who served in Agamemnon's army before Troy and distinguished themselves for their skill in curing wounds. There is nothing to indicate that he was himself divine, or indeed that he differed from a normal Homeric baron in anything except his abilities in medicine and surgery. Whether he was originally a man, possibly real, or a minor god is a point on which modern opinions differ, but his usual legend made him the son of Apollo by a mortal woman, Koronis. Like his divine father, he was a most potent healer, and he came to his end by taking his skill too far and using it to raise the dead, whereupon Zeus, troubled it would seem for the order of the universe, by which only gods live forever and men all die, killed him with a thunderbolt. By some process which we cannot follow, he was singled out from among the many heroes who performed miracles of healing to become the patron of physicians. He was associated in cult with several vague figures, such as Iaso (Healing) and Hygieia (Health), and both he and they found their place, together with Apollo, in the physicians' oath. Quite suddenly, during the concluding decades of the fifth century, his cult spread to several places in Greece, the most noteworthy being Epidauros in the neighbourhood of Argos. Here an elaborate precinct was constructed, containing among other buildings a dormitory for patients who desired to consult Asklepios for his advice about their health. The regular, though not the invariable, method was for the god to send a dream, either recommending some remedy or restoring the sick man or woman immediately. A long list of cures was recorded on stone in the holy place, and many of these inscriptions have survived to be discovered and commented on in modern times. They present the usual difficulties of records of healing shrines, Christian or non-Christian. There is no solid

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indeed, many of the newer cities, such as Alexandria and Pergamon, celebrated the feasts of their 'official gods with enormous elaboration and splendour and built them temples and altars which were triumphs of the art and architecture of that day. But they seem to have lost in reality as they gained in magnificence. Certainly the impression given by Alexandrian literature is that to the educated classes the Olympians meant hardly more than they do to us; they were very picturesque figures still, excellent subjects for poetry and interesting topics for learned discussions, but the life had gone or was rapidly going out of them. Even when they were imaginatively handled, what is stressed is not their superhuman features, but their resemblance to ordinary humanity. They are often humorously drawn, and humour is not the best companion to reverence. When Kallimachos, for instance, the most influential poet of the Ptolemaic age, writes a hymn to Zeus, although his expressed sentiments are perfectly orthodox, it is clear that his real interest in the god is of two kinds. The legends concerning Zeus give good material for displaying antiquarian learning in the neatest of verse, and the acknowledgment of his supreme power as king among the gods leads up, through an account of his dealings with earthly monarchs, to a great deal of clever indirect flattery of Ptolemy II. No doubt Kallimachos joined decorously in the ritual of Alexandria; but what his personal beliefs were, or if he had any, we simply do not know. That he professed in verse reverence for the gods he mentioned, horror at impiety and abhorrence for the views of Euhemeros proves nothing at all; those were the correct things for a poet to say, and therefore he said them. Myths, for example, which represent gods as cruel or revengeful are told without comment or criticism, as a modern might tell a story about a wicked fairy; they are literary material, no more. Apollo is the source of the poet's inspiration, and well pleased with his performance; in other words, Kallimachos has his literary principles and takes credit to himself for not departing from them. The god is rather a personification of good criticism, or of the judgment of readers gifted with good taste, than the deity who, in Homer, strode dark as night to bring plague to the Achaian camp, or who inspired his prophetess to comfort the involuntary slayer of his comrade. Even his manly beauty

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productions of literary men. The reason for all this was plain enough. By chance, we mean something whose causes we can neither control, predict nor understand. The Hellenistic age had seen many events which came unexpectedly and were revolutionary in their effects. Old powers had sunk to impotence, new ones had grown up rapidly and often fallen again with no less speed. The individual Greek, who under the old system of city-states had been generally, in some small measure at least, the arbiter of his own destiny, and tolerably well acquainted with the forces which made for or against the prosperity of his city, now was the prey of movements, political and economic, which he did not understand and over which he had not the smallest influence. He must often have been in doubt whether the next month or year would see him still nominally a free citizen, and if so, what new name it would be proper to hail as that of the "benefactor" or "saviour" of his state, or of all mankind. If involved in one of the frequent wars of the time, he was fighting, or watching others fight, not on behalf of a cause which he could know and sympathize with, but on account of a quarrel between two potentates whom he had never seen. Under the circumstances, it was no great wonder if very many gave up trying to find a rational cause for the happenings which influenced their public and private lives, and resorted to a belief in a blind and capricious power and a vague hope that they might be able to induce that power to favour them.

We now pass to less negative attempts to deal with the problems of human life and the world men live in.

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of Plato, and among those whose private religions were based on doctrines of his there must have been many who had read little or nothing of what he wrote; for his dialogues are not easy for any but a tolerably alert mind to follow at any point, while, like all thinkers of high rank, he often discusses themes too abstruse for any but the philosophically trained to comprehend him. But compendia of his chief doctrines and other such derivative works were common, and with these in their hands many could either understand or think they understood some portion of his results. So in our own times, standard works, for instance on political economy, influence many who know them only at second or third hand. Such second-hand and often very uncritical study of him naturally led also to modifications of what he had taught and blending of it with ideas from other philosophers, even those of totally different schools. Two chief blends came into being in the last decades of the pre-Christian era and afterwards. Poseidonios, who lived about 135—60 or a little later B.C., made Stoicism, as he understood it, into a mixed philosophy containing strongly Platonic elements, and thus provided his school, which originally seems to have held that the human soul was material and mortal, with a doctrine of the Last Things holding out hopes of a blissful eternity to the virtuous. During his lifetime also, Pythagoreanism, or what was understood to be Pythagoreanism, revived and produced a new literature alleged to be written by early followers of Pythagoras. It also borrowed largely from Plato, who in his turn had been influenced by real Pythagoreans of his own day, and came out to a doctrine in which high metaphysical conceptions were combined with curious mystic juggleries with numbers and a fair amount of sheer magic and superstition. Platonism itself, as the Christian era went on, was blended with new subtleties and so became what is known as Neoplatonism, a school which produced one first-rate metaphysician, Plotinos, and several minor thinkers of interest. All these systems agreed on one principal point at least. The world was divided into the material or phenomenal, which we can perceive with our bodily senses, and the intellectual, which can be grasped by the mind only, being quite imperceptible to any sense. In Platonism and the allied schools it is immaterial; in orthodox Stoicism it is not, but

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was most praiseworthy, considering that they were wholly without instruments, that all the apparent movements of the sun, moon and planets take place within that part of the heavens which we, adapting one of its Greek names, call the Zodiac (*zodiakòs kýklos*, figured belt), i.e., from the point of view of an observer on earth, they are always in line with some part of those constellations which form the Zodiac. By the time this system and the beliefs attached to it reached Greece, i.e., about the generation after Alexander the Great, the Zodiac was usually divided into twelve constellations, or signs, corresponding to the twelve months of the solar year. In each of these groups, a lively and pictorial fancy caught a resemblance to some familiar figure. Thus, the first group, roughly one-twelfth of the whole, was thought to be a ram, the second a bull, the third two human figures standing side by side, and so throughout. Now, by a series of fanciful analogies, each of these was associated with something of interest to human beings, for instance, the twelfth sign, supposed to be two fishes, with the industry of fishing, the bull with farming, and so forth. The planets also, among which sun and moon were included (it was not, of course, recognized that the earth is itself a planet, and Neptune and Uranus had not been discovered), were credited with similar associations. Mars, for instance, as we call it—a Greek would say “the star of Ares,” if he did not use its older name, Pyroeis (Fiery)—influenced war and all things connected with it, including violent death. Now obviously, at the moment of anyone’s birth, the planets must be in some of the signs, and the influences which they were credited with sending out centripetally towards the earth as they circled around it would affect the new-born child then and afterwards. As time went on, and doubtless also as many of the older and simpler predictions were falsified by experience, a prodigiously complicated system of divination, which took account of a large number of celestial phenomena at once, was evolved, and went generally under the name of *mathesis*, the science. We call it astrology, which in antiquity means more nearly what we term astronomy.

About the time this began to attract the serious attention of Greeks, who were ready enough to believe the stars divine, though, as we have seen (p. 13), they did not worship them, the

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Sophokles in the fifth, declares that the best thing is not to be born at all, the next best to die as soon as possible. This sort of sentiment, the much-talked-of "melancholy of the Greeks," is prominent in Alexandrian literature, and in that age also, many utterances suggest an acquiescence in, even a welcome of, the thought that this life ends all. A common epitaph, for instance, is, "I was not; I came to be; I am not; I care not." It is not, therefore, surprising that there were many who grasped eagerly at any way out of their position of bondage which was suggested to them.

The chief solutions, apart from an attitude of unbelief or cynical indifference, depended upon the distinction between the higher and lower strata of the universe already mentioned. Fate worked, in popular belief, through the stars, or at any rate between their spheres and the earth. Therefore, if contact could be made with the powers who are above the stars, Fate might yet be thwarted. Now the gods live beyond the planetary influences. To get them on one's side, by whatsoever means, is, as it were, to take Fate in rear and oppose to its inexorable decrees a force even more potent.

A very old attempt on the part of man to grapple with the difficulties of his environment is magic. Everywhere in the world, it has been held at one time or another that the performance of certain acts and the recitation of certain words would give the operator control over some part of nature, or over the thoughts and actions of his fellows. For the most part, in Greece, this had been a fairly simple business, comparable to the customs which still linger among European peoples and are either half-believed or kept up from mere force of habit and tradition, such as touching wood, saying "bless you" when someone sneezes, avoiding a dinner-table which has thirteen guests, feeling a vague uneasiness if a mirror is broken, and the like. In classical Greece, however, they were much more prominent, at any rate among the simpler people, and also more alive, less in a state of nearly fossilized survival. Instead of some few carrying "mascots," either always or when about some dangerous business, many, especially many women, commonly wore amulets. There are some people now who avoid Friday as a day for commencing anything of importance, because it is unlucky; there were

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temptation to attribute it to a "sympathy" between what was regularly held to be a watery planet and the element of water on earth was very strong. But innumerable "sympathies" were deduced on far less plausible grounds than this. In many cases, indeed, we are quite at a loss to know what produced the belief in a particular sympathy, or an antipathy, between two disparate objects. Why, for example, was it ever supposed that an elephant when *musth* grew calm at the sight of a ram, that a bull, however wild, became tame and manageable if tied to a fig-tree, that a lion which stepped on the leaves of a kermes-oak was numbed, and that a hyena produced the same effect upon a man if it approached him from his right side, but not if it came from his left? Bad observation might result in the notion that a snake could be put out of action if struck once with a cane, but revived if struck several times, but one would think that a very little experience would have taught that it did not relieve the pain of a scorpion-sting to whisper into the ear of an ass "a scorpion has stung me." Nevertheless, this and other equally fantastic beliefs survived, and, from about the year 200 B.C. on, it became extraordinarily common for dabblers in science to take such ideas at their face value and find reasons for them, instead of refuting them by experiment. Among the many things to which the doctrine applied was the gathering of herbs. These, because many of them really have an effect on the human body and many more were supposed to, always formed a great part of the *materia medica* of antiquity. Now they were brought into close relation with the heavenly bodies, whose influence, still in accordance with the general theory of sympathies, could pass into them if the proper precautions were taken. There survive not a few directions of astrological type, telling the practitioner to gather this plant when the sun is in Virgo, that one in the hour of Venus, and so forth. The collector must himself observe sundry rules regarding his person, such as sleeping beside the herb he means to gather in the morning, wearing loose clothing with no belt or other constricting part, abstaining from sexual indulgence, and other tabus, all tending to prevent him bringing a hostile influence to bear on the plant he means to use. Logically, for once the grotesque alleged facts are conceded, the whole pseudo-science is logical, the stars had likewise their relations to

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daring sorcerer who, protected by one of these bits of sacred cloth, ventured to summon him to give advice or help. Those whose ambitions did not soar so high as this had plenty of ways to charm lesser powers. For instance, anyone having an enemy whom he wished to harm, or a too coy sweetheart, would use some such method as the following. Having first obtained an *usia* of the person to be affected, he would, if it was a love-charm, make a magical figure of potter's clay and attach the *usia* to it. Then he would go to the grave of someone who had died untimely by violence, this being one of the most restless and potent of the dead, and, with sundry invocations of chthonian powers to help the ghost, leave the apparatus in its keeping, with instructions to go and find the woman in question and give her no rest till she visited the magician. If hate, not love, was the motive, a curse might be written (regularly on lead, Saturn's metal) and put into the grave of a suitable person, for instance an executed criminal. It would contain an adjuration of the ghost, by all manner of potent names, Greek and foreign (Yahweh and Jesus, the latter after Christianity had begun to make itself felt, are not uncommon), including names of deities who never had any sort of existence, but are put together from a variety of uncouth sounds, to trouble the offender. In simple forms, this kind of magic is quite early, being found in Attic graves before the Hellenistic period, and it lasts late, Christian examples occurring to show that the new faith had not done away with the old desires and their attendant superstitions. Generally, however, the milder doctrines seem to have brought with them sufficient change of heart to make the wizards rather perform spells for the healing of diseases, or protection against enemies, fleshly or ghostly, than for positively harmful ends.

But there were magicians whose aims seem to have been higher than the satisfaction of everyday lusts and hates. All magic professed—it is one of the commonest assertions, even of the most vulgar practitioners—to be a divine revelation. It was a form of the *gnosis* which we saw Plutarch seeking from the gods (p. 108). Its name was derived from the Magoi, or Zoroastrian priests, of Persia, whose reputation stood high, from at least the days of Plato onwards, for wisdom and sanctity. It was practised in some of its most elaborate forms in Babylonia

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But something higher is to be found when we come to analyse this particular ritual. It begins with the following address to the deity invoked, presumably Mithra, who is said to have sent it to the expert "by his archangel."

"First origin of my origin, first beginning of my beginning, breath of breath, first of the breath that is in me, fire, god-given for my blending of the blendings in me, first of the fire in me, water of water, first of the water in me, earthly substance, first of the earthly substance in me, perfect body of me (here the officiant names himself, adding, in the usual magical fashion, the name of his mother), shaped by a glorious arm and an immortal right hand in a world which is not lit but shines throughout, a world which has no soul but is animate, if it be your good pleasure to restore me to eternal birth, according to the nature which underlies me . . . since it is beyond my power, being but mortal, to meet the golden beams of the everlasting light, be still, mortal nature, and take me again safely when the unavoidable need which now presses on me is past."

This, in the first place, shows clear signs of a philosophical origin. The god is a celestial counterpart of the four elements which, in the opinion of most schools of thought in Greece since the fifth century B.C., go to make up all material things, including the living bodies of man and the lower animals. Then, like the Orphics, the officiant claims something more than an earthly origin; it is his "underlying nature" which makes him capable of the rebirth he ardently desires. He is still in the body, and therefore his experience of supernatural life will be but for a little while; still, he is capable of it. On the other hand, his methods are definitely magical. Not only does he use a fixed form of words, which in itself might be part of a non-magical religious service, but he mixes them with a number of meaningless sounds, recitations of the vowels of the Greek alphabet arranged in various orders, whistlings and hissings and strings of magical names, which have been omitted in the above translation. Having recited the opening prayer, he is directed to breathe deeply three times "from the rays of light"—apparently he is facing the sun as he performs his ritual. He will then feel a lightness and seem to be lifted high up, "so that you will think you are in the midst of the air." Rising higher and higher, and

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chances of recovery proportionately bettered; most of the traditional magical cures appear to have been quite harmless, though few of them had any real therapeutic effect whatever.

But by no means all seekers after *gnosis* were magicians, even of the lofty "theurgic" type. Not a few found satisfaction in mysteries, of which many existed in the Hellenistic world, for not only did Eleusis continue to initiate people of all nations, but several new cults of a similar kind sprang up or were revived. A famous example is the mysteries at Andania in the Peloponnesos, which Pausanias reckons the holiest, next to Eleusis itself. We have not only his account of them, but a long inscription, much earlier than his time, which prescribes minutely for their organization, though naturally it does not tell us what the secret rites were. The cult, which concerned deities known as the Great Goddesses, had ceased to be celebrated when Sparta conquered Messenia, but long after, when Thebes broke the power of Sparta in the fourth century B.C., it revived. A picturesque legend told how Epameinondas, the great Theban statesman and general, had been warned in a dream to restore Messenia, while at the same time his ally, Epiteles, the commander of the forces of Argos, was miraculously instructed where to find the records which contained directions for the conduct of the festival. We can well suppose that these venerable, or supposedly venerable, ceremonies had read into them whatever doctrines the initiates believed in, exactly as happened at Eleusis and doubtless in many other, less-known centres. Private cults, founded in obedience to warnings in dreams or visions, are often attested by surviving inscriptions, and it is to be regretted that we do not know more concerning their ritual. Foreign mysteries, on the other hand, such as those of Isis and Osiris, which flourished in Ptolemaic Egypt and spread throughout the Roman empire, were not so popular with Greeks as in other nations. We have indeed seen (p. 108) that Plutarch's friend Klea was an initiate of the Egyptian gods, and she was not unique or even very exceptional in this respect; but local patriotism remained fairly strong in religious matters, and it is worth noting that Klea accepted the theory that Osiris is merely another name for that Dionysos whom she worshipped in her own country. But to treat of Egyptian, Persian and other foreign mystery-

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inventions as the most unreliable of the lives of Christian saints. According to the wordy romance which Philostratos concocted, Apollonios was marked from his birth for something more than the general run of mankind; he rebuked sinners, went about uttering short, dogmatic sayings full of pith and force, travelled over a great part of the world, including India, to converse with sages of various nationalities and languages, performed a number of miracles, overcame all manner of evil powers both temporal and spiritual, including the Emperor Domitian, whom he impressed by suddenly vanishing from before him and whose assassination he saw in a clairvoyant vision, and finally, after living to a great age, disappeared from among men without anyone being sure whether he had died or not. Subtracting this fanciful ornament, we may gather from this and other sources that he was a man of ascetic life, impressive in manner and doubtless perfectly sincere, who lived through a great part of the first century A.D. and made a name for himself as a sort of combination of philosopher and prophet. He seems to have been interested in ritual, at all events a work on sacrifices was ascribed to him, and may quite possibly have dabbled in magic of the higher sort. That he gave instruction in philosophy as he understood it is credible enough, but his abiding reputation as either a supernaturally gifted man or a wizard, according as the testimony is friendly to him or not, suggests that he was in some way abnormal, perhaps subject to trances and visions, whether natural to his constitution or artificially induced. In other words, he was what is now sometimes called "mediumistic".

So much for one remarkable individual; it should not be forgotten that there were whole sects and conventicles of mystics having more or less tincture of philosophy, and their literature has come down to us in sufficient quantity for us to judge of their doctrines. The Egyptian Thot, identified by the Greeks with Hermes, was credited with the authorship of a great number of works on various subjects, including alchemy, astrology and other forms of divination. Among these is a collection known as the Hermetic corpus, which we can supplement by remains of similar documents from other sources, including a Latin work, *Asclepius*, manifestly a translation from a Greek original, which has come to us under the name of

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Men), "the Mind of Authority". Poimandres then shows the mystic a vision, in which he sees a great light and a great darkness, respectively reality and matter. From the light comes "a holy Logos," which attracts to itself the fiery part of matter, followed by the air; earth and water remain below, but are stirred by the Logos, which blows upon them like a wind and makes them ready to listen. This Logos is asserted to be the "shining Son of God," who proceeds from Mind itself; and Mind and the mystic's God are expressly identified.

So far, this might be a Stoic cosmogony. The arrangement of the lighter and heavier elements agrees with their ideas, and indeed with those of all schools; they are based on the observed facts that flames tend to rise and that air or gas will bubble up from water. The Logos also might be Stoic, for they made great play with *lógoi spermatikoi*, "generative principles," as active forces in the universe, while their deity was of the nature of fire or light, and not wholly immaterial. But the work goes on to describe a further process of creation, which involves several emanations of the Mind and results in the appearance of the material universe. It is therefore plain enough that the first vision showed the formation of the Platonic Form or Idea of ordered matter, the concept of it, thought of as a separate reality of which the visible embodiment, the material universe, is but an imitation or reflexion. We have therefore a mixture of the thought of different schools, not uncommon after the time of Poseidonios (see p. 117). But one of the chief lessons which Poimandres teaches his disciple is that, as a result of this long and complicated process of world-making, the Logos itself dwells in man; its father is the Mind itself, they cannot really be separated, and their union is life.

All this doctrine, which besides the Greek elements already mentioned shows clear traces of influence from non-Greek sources, including apparently Zoroastrianism, is represented, not as the result of thought, however eclectic, but as a revelation; Poimandres shows his pupil visions and afterwards explains them, briefly and dogmatically. It is a *gnosis*, to be won by those sufficiently prepared for it, not a conclusion to be attained by metaphysical reasoning. Indeed, the obscure style of the work and a certain confusion in the terminology are enough to show

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these schools, for Gnosticism was not one doctrine but many, stressed the difference between the immaterial and material worlds far more even than the most idealistic of the Greek thinkers had done. Matter they regarded as entirely evil, and consequently seem to have prescribed a rigid asceticism, at least for those who aimed at perfection, although some, if we may believe their opponents, held all ordinary moral distinctions to be matters of indifference, or even encouraged the grossest vices, as being something which the incarnate soul was bound to fall into while in such a vile place as the body, and therefore best got through with as quickly as possible, since the inferior powers who rule the visible world would insist on reincarnating those who still had some sins left to commit. All alike interposed between Deity and matter a series of emanations, more and more elaborate as their doctrines developed, only the lowest of which were capable of having anything to do with matter. On blending this theory with Hebrew tradition, they reached the logical conclusion that the God of the Old Testament, since he created the visible world, was a very inferior being, many removes from the true Deity. The comparatively simple Christian dogma of the Incarnation was caught up into the meshes of the system and adorned with complicated subtleties. The least absurd of these was a distinction between Jesus, who was a man of unusually pure and strong soul, remarkably resistant to the evil influences of the lower creation, and Christ, an emanation of rather high grade who entered into Jesus at his baptism and left him again just before the Passion. Many more such details have been preserved for us by the shocked interest of orthodox Christian writers, to whom it was all most abominable blasphemy.

It thus becomes clear that when the new religion began to develop and spread, it did not come as a thing wholly unfamiliar. It was monotheistic; so, in effect, were the more philosophical of the existing cults. Its God was transcendent; so were those of Hermetism, Neoplatonism, and half a score of other systems. He was a creator, and therefore could come into some sort of contact with matter, though Himself immensely superior to it; no genuine Platonist would be surprised at that, for Plato himself describes an elaborate process of creation in one of

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content. In particular, its eschatology and its conception of the nature of supernatural beings below Divine rank owed nearly everything to Greek speculations. The *datmones* divided into angels and devils; Hell, Purgatory and Paradise had long been current ideas in Greece; that the souls of the righteous should attain to more than mortal condition was a familiar enough conception, for it had long been taught that the soul of a good man might become a "hero", a hero a *datmon*, and a *datmon* ultimately a god. Even the location of the places of reward and punishment were in accordance with existing ideas, Heaven being the natural abode of the soul in Platonic and other philosophies, while Hell is the descendant of Tartaros, the traditional prison of rebels against the classical gods. Even the visions of the other world which are to be found in early Christian literature, such as the so-called Apocalypse of Peter, have at least as much Greek as foreign imagery in them. It is significant that such a man as St. Clement of Alexandria, who was far from unsympathetic to Greek thought as he understood it, claimed that it was one of the forms of providential preparation for the perfect doctrine, and that Christianity was the true *gnosis*.

But what has been discussed in this chapter must not be taken as a description of every Greek, or the average Greek, of the later ages of antiquity. The pious and saintly are rare in every country and at every time; the normally respectable, who usually conform to any religious usages which may be prevalent, are many. It is not to be forgotten that the religions which for a time rivalled Christianity were of the cities, and that Christianity itself spread mainly in the larger communities. The countryside mostly remained as it always had been, so far as its sacral observances were concerned. Since the succession of the seasons was unchanged and the peasants' labours likewise, it was but natural that they should remain interested chiefly in the rites which traditionally aided them in their seedtime and harvest. It may well be doubted if many converts to any of the more developed systems, with their elaborate theologies and wire-drawn controversies, lived outside the towns. Demeter and her daughter, or their local equivalents, the Nymphs and other minor deities, had a strong hold on rustic affections.

content. In particular, its eschatology and its conception of the nature of supernatural beings below Divine rank owed nearly everything to Greek speculations. The *daimones* divided into angels and devils; Hell, Purgatory and Paradise had long been current ideas in Greece; that the souls of the righteous should attain to more than mortal condition was a familiar enough conception, for it had long been taught that the soul of a good man might become a "hero", a hero a *daimon*, and a *daimon* ultimately a god. Even the location of the places of reward and punishment were in accordance with existing ideas, Heaven being the natural abode of the soul in Platonic and other philosophies, while Hell is the descendant of Tartaros, the traditional prison of rebels against the classical gods. Even the visions of the other world which are to be found in early Christian literature, such as the so-called Apocalypse of Peter, have at least as much Greek as foreign imagery in them. It is significant that such a man as St. Clement of Alexandria, who was far from unsympathetic to Greek thought as he understood it, claimed that it was one of the forms of providential preparation for the perfect doctrine, and that Christianity was the true *gnosis*.

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CHAPTER VII

SURVIVALS

Few subjects require more delicate and skilled handling than that of the survival of ancient in modern Greece. Resemblances between the customs, legends and beliefs of the present-day country people and the myths and ceremonies of antiquity are numerous and well known; but to assume, as investigators were once apt to do, that the former descend directly from the latter is rash, for similar resemblances can be found in countries which have no historical connexion with classical Greece at all. Also, Greece has been invaded several times since the close of the latest classical epoch (for convenience, we may take the reign of Justinian, A.D. 527-565, as the dividing boundary), and a proportion of her present population, how large is matter of dispute, is not of Greek descent. Her culture also has been much affected by foreign contact and domination, witness the numerous Italian and Turkish words which, along with a few that are Slavonic and a sprinkling from other sources, including English and French, mark the modern vocabulary. Hence, if we find something in a Greek village which reminds us of a description in some classical author, we must examine it closely to make sure that we are not faced with a story or a practice brought in by Slavs, Albanians, Italians or Turks sometime in the troubled centuries which have elapsed since Justinian died. The question has been further obscured by the natural and excusable zeal of some Greek antiquarians who, properly proud of the glorious history of their ancestors, have tried to prove everything in Greece to be Greek. Yet, when all modifications and subtractions have been made, there is a solid residue of modern material whose descent from the classical period is either quite certain or so strongly attested as to be practically beyond dispute. This chapter will confine itself to a few examples belonging to this category, omitting many interesting speculations and much that is attractive to any folklorist for its own intrinsic value, regardless of its origin.

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ally, instead of a wrestling-match, he engages in a contest of jumping, which he wins with a prodigious leap, securing the agreed stake, which is the person of the vanquished competitor. Despite all the efforts of Christian teachers, the popular imagination still has the same attitude towards death and the other world as it had in the days of Homer; Charos' abode is devoid of all attractions, dark, gloomy and full of decay, with none of the cheerful occupations of the life on earth. This picture exists side by side with that derived from the teaching of the Orthodox Church, with which, of course, it is completely inconsistent. Such self-contradiction, however, is characteristic of the popular eschatologies of all peoples. As in antiquity, so to-day, the average Greek is desirous of life as he understands it, that is to say, in the body and under the familiar sun. He may be intellectually persuaded of the immortality of the soul and future rewards and punishments, but not imaginatively much interested in them. This may reasonably be taken as indicating that none of the other-worldly religions, even that which finally won universal acceptance, penetrated deep into popular feeling. One or two examples may be given. In a song from Chios, the speaker, climbing a cliff to get at an apple-tree, comes to a burial ground and accidentally treads on a grave. A voice comes from it:

"Was I not also young, was I not also a champion? Did I not walk by night when the moon was shining? Did not I carry a forty-cubit sword and a sixty-cubit lance? And now do you trample over my head?"

Some such imaginative picture of the dead man protesting against the disrespect to his buried body might have been composed any time in the last three thousand years or so. It has nothing specifically Christian about it, and owes nothing to any eschatology. The following, from Kephallonia, actually combines a Hades of Homeric dreariness with a fragment of Christian terminology:

"I would be a merchant, to go down to Hades, to take clothes for the young girls and weapons for the young men, also fezzes from Tunis for the handsome bachelors. I clasped my hands, I besought Charos to lend me the keys, the keys of Paradise, that I might see

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merely of the Nereids but of the Nymphs. It must not be forgotten that similar figures exist in the folklore of more than one Balkan people, but the case for the Hellenic origin of the Neratdhes is strong. Practically everything they are said to do and be can be paralleled from antiquity. Nymphs on occasion play the part of fairy brides to mortals (Daphnis, the half-divine shepherd of Sicilian Greek tradition, was beloved by one of them, who blinded him when he proved unfaithful to her); they are very beautiful, they sometimes carry off mortals, though they do not seem to kidnap babies and leave changelings in their place, as Neratdhes sometimes do. They can drive people mad, but also they can heal diseases, if properly approached, and similar activities are reported of the modern spirits. In the latter case, it is proper to make them an offering of honey-cakes or some similar delicacy, which, incidentally, was a common sacrifice in antiquity. Also, the Neratdhes are very apt to haunt wells, in other words, to behave like ancient Naiads, or water-nymphs.

Another survival is a purely evil being, the Ghelloú, in ancient Greek Gelló, a formidable ghost who haunted Greek nurseries as far back as the seventh century B.C. and was supposed to cause untimely deaths of children. It was her revenge for her own early death. Nowadays Ghelloú, or the Ghel-louídhēs, for like most vague figures of this kind she is now one and now many, seems especially to attack young mothers if she can get admission to the house by any wile.

More important are the Moires. In antiquity, these were spirits of birth, who were also powers of fate; we hear of them visiting the birth-room and there determining the destiny of a new-born child. It is the same to-day; they visit houses where there has been a birth—in Aigina, they come on the third day and an entertainment is prepared for them, to put them in good humour—generally after dark, but sometimes earlier, if the mother is asleep and no one else is in the room. Popular descriptions of them vary, often being influenced by ancient myths or representations in art of the three traditional spinners, but sometimes showing independence of such learned sources, as they probably are. In some places there are signs by which it can be known whether the fate they have assigned the child

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growth of customs unconnected, so far as we know, with anything ancient that it is an almost hopeless task to pick out fragments of the old ways from the mass of newer ones; although much of the traditional popular ritual which attends a Greek village wedding is certainly not of yesterday, and much more of it than we know of is perhaps ancient, for we are but ill-informed about the details of the classical ceremonial, even in Athens, to say nothing of less-known places. For instance, music is a regular feature of weddings in modern times; it is produced by local singers and instrumentalists, it includes elaborate traditional compliments to all concerned, especially, of course, the young couple themselves, and it occurs both before and after the actual day and night of the wedding. But it would be rather a large assumption that it descends directly from the wedding-songs of antiquity, the most famous of which, the *epithalamion*, made its way into literature, so that we know from Sappho and Theokritos something of its contents; it complimented bride and groom and was sung outside their apartment. The wedding-songs of to-day are indeed largely traditional, but their metre, poetical technique and formulæ are all distinctively modern, showing no trace of anything derived from ancient or even early mediæval sources. We can, therefore, only say that it is quite possible that the custom has been continuous, changing its outward form little by little as language and ideas as to what constituted metre and poetical diction altered. Perhaps more to the point is that rice, small coins and sweetmeats are often flung over bride and groom, a possible remnant of the ancient *katachýsmata*, though the practice of flinging something of the kind over or at the parties to a wedding is so widespread that it may have reached Greece from any one of a number of sources. In all customs of this kind, which imply ideas common to a large part of humanity (here, probably, a wish that the married couple may be fertile as the grains are, and their life prosperous and pleasant, as typified by the coins and sweetmeats) there is always a possibility that we are not dealing with a true survival, but rather an unconscious revival. Perhaps more significant is the occasional presence at a modern Greek marriage of a little boy who accompanies the bride. Anciently, on Keos, he used to

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wedding. It is independent of, indeed precedes, the ceremony at the church which is now, of course, the binding one, recognized by law and public opinion.

It can therefore be seen that, lingering here and there, we can find at least probable survivals of the pre-Christian methods of conducting a wedding. But if such ceremonies are apt to be conservative, those connected with death are still more so, however much eschatological doctrine may alter. Therefore it is not at all surprising to learn that the soul is thought of as leaving the body by the mouth, much as breath does. There is, indeed, nothing specifically Greek in this, Greek being but one of many languages which use words for "soul" and "spirit" etymologically connected with those which signify wind and breath. However, it is safe to take it as Greek when it occurs in the Greek area. The general feeling concerning its fate when it arrives in the other world, although naturally affected by ecclesiastical teaching and also by some other elements not traceable to antiquity, yet has much in it which an ancient would recognize as familiar. The judges of the dead are no longer, as in classical (at least Athenian) mythology, Aiakos, the just king of Aigina, Minos king of Crete and Rhadamanthys his brother, but the tribunal is still in some places a triple one; the judges are God, the Virgin Mary and the Apostles. Nor is worldly wealth a factor entirely to be left out of the calculation. In Plato, old Kephalos explains to Sokrates why it is good to be comfortably off, if one has led an upright life. It means that the dying man has no unpaid debts of any kind; he has settled with his human creditors, and he has also given the gods their proper sacrifices. There has been no constraint of poverty to cheat either of them, and so he can depart cheerfully to the other world. To the modern peasant, this has taken a Christianized form; if the dead man was well-to-do, there will be no lack of means to give him a proper funeral and appropriate requiem masses (or their Orthodox equivalent), for the good of his soul. And the fewer one has wronged, the easier it is to die, for one of the principal causes of a prolonged death-agony is someone's refusal to forgive injuries done him. It need hardly be stressed that an unpaid debt is one of the commonest of injuries and not the least bitterly

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Setting aside one or two beliefs which seem to derive, not from any classical Greek idea, but from usages or doctrines common to the whole or a great part of the Roman Empire, we may note a close resemblance between the ancient and modern days on which a rite of commemoration of the dead takes place. Putting together data from sundry places in Greece, we find that these are now the third, sixth, ninth and fortieth days from the death, also the last days of the third, sixth and ninth months, besides anniversaries. Of these, we know the names of the first two in antiquity (*trita* and *enata* respectively) and of one corresponding to the third; the ancients used the thirtieth, not the fortieth day. What has brought about the change we do not know, but may conjecture that it is the importance of the number forty in Hebrew tradition, upon which a considerable part of Christian usage is based. Monthly funeral feasts sometimes took place in antiquity, and annual ones are common; we have mentioned (p. 41) the *genesia* which were held at Athens and elsewhere. Moreover, at the funeral itself, when the body has been buried, a quite elaborate meal is, or was, demanded by traditional custom, corresponding to the funeral feasts which mark both Greek and Roman antiquity, from the earliest times of which we have record onwards. At this meal, an invariable dish, prominent in other ceremonies relating to the dead, is *kóllyva*, an old word which in our days signifies frumety, in other words boiled grain, generally with some additions to improve the flavour, which, however, are not essentials but only subsidiary things. This, one of the most obvious and easy ways of preparing edible seeds, is probably much older than the discovery of how to make any sort of

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We have thus traced, in very brief outline, the history of Greek pre-Christian religion from its earliest known forms to the traces which still linger at the present day or in recent times. Those who wish for a more complete knowledge are referred in the first instance to the works listed in the Bibliography.

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(4) PARTICULAR DEITIES

Such works are innumerable, as are also accounts of the cults of particular places, but two very valuable storehouses of material are:

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Edelstein, Emma J., and Ludwig. *Asclepius: a Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*. 2 vols., Baltimore, 1945.

(5) ORPHISM

Guthrie, W. K. C., *Orpheus and Greek Religion*. London, 1935.

The fullest work in English, well-informed and very sane, avoiding extravagances into which many writers on the subject have fallen.

Linforth, Ivan M. *The Arts of Orpheus*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1941.

Excellent critical study.

(6) CONTACTS WITH CHRISTIANITY

Halliday, W. R. *Pagan Background of early Christianity*. Liverpool, 1925.

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Nock, A. D. *Conversion*. Oxford, 1933.

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(7) CONTACTS WITH ETHICS, &C.

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Moore, Clifford Herschel. *The Religious Thought of the Greeks*, 2nd edition, Cambridge (Mass.), 1925.

Well-informed, pleasantly written sketch.

(8) SURVIVALS IN MODERN GREECE

Argenti, P. P., and Rose, H. J. *Folklore of Chios*. To appear shortly (Cambridge).

Many of the examples in Chapter VII are taken from this work.

Lawson, John Cuthbert. *Modern Greek Folklore and ancient Greek Religion*. Cambridge, 1910.

Interesting, but often inaccurate.

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(5) ORPHISM

Guthrie, W. K. C., *Orpheus and Greek Religion*. London, 1935.

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